



EPHESIANS: WEEK 4

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WEEK 4: LIVING A NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

Bible: *So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise.*
Ephesians 5:15 (NLT)

Bottom Line: As we live our "new life" in Christ, our "old life" becomes a thing of the past.

REVIEW OF WEEKS 1-3

We have been spending the last three weeks looking at a letter written by Paul, with the help of some friends, to a bunch of churches around the city of Ephesus.

The first three chapters focus on the Good News of Jesus' story.

The last three chapters focus on how Jesus' story impacts our story, directing and empowering us to live holy lives.

Last week we ended with a light cliff-hanger as we read that we are to imitate Jesus and live as "people of light," but Paul had not yet given us the specifics for what that looks like.

That's where we'll pick up today in chapter five of Ephesians.

Read Ephesians 5:15 - 6:9 - Use the opportunities God gives you to influence others.

15 *So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. 16 Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. 17 Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do. 18 Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit, 19 singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts. 20 And give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

21 *And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

22 *For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. 24 As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything.*

25 *For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her 26 to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. 27 He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault.*

28 *In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies.*

For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. 29 No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. 30 And we are members of his body.

31 As the Scriptures say, “A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.”

32 This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one. 33 So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Ephesians 6

1 Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do. 2 “Honor your father and mother.” This is the first commandment with a promise: 3 If you honor your father and mother, “things will go well for you, and you will have a long life on the earth.”

4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord.

5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with deep respect and fear. Serve them sincerely as you would serve Christ.

6 Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you. As slaves of Christ, do the will of God with all your heart. 7 Work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.

8 Remember that the Lord will reward each one of us for the good we do, whether we are slaves or free.

9 Masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Don’t threaten them; remember, you both have the same Master in heaven, and he has no favorites.

TEACH

Wow! From a vague ending last week to a major list of ways we are to live this week!

First, let me say that it is easy to get distracted by some of what Paul says here.

We must remember that Paul wrote this to specific people living around Ephesus around A.D. 60. This letter is also *for* us, but it wasn’t written *to* us.

Some of what Paul says here doesn’t apply to you right now because you are not married.

And what Paul says here about slavery may be a bit shocking, but it would have been shocking for the people in his day because of the respect he was giving to the slaves.

He was not endorsing slavery but addressing a reality in his day.

That's just one of the things he says that could be a whole separate study.

So, let's focus on what challenges us specifically today.

We have focused enough on what we are not to do. And I think most of you either know that already or can read it again later.

Let's focus on the way we *should* be living.

There is an interesting section about being filled with God's Holy Spirit and singing being part of this life.

Then he points to a Christian household as an example of how to live our lives as the church in relation to Jesus.

This whole section could be summed up in the words, "humility" and "sacrifice."

The kind of lives we are to live will reflect Jesus as we live humbly, putting others' needs before our own, and making sacrificial decisions to care more for others than ourselves.

Make sure you don't misunderstand Paul here.

He's not saying that you are not important or that you are to put yourself down.

He's saying that you are to lift others up and help them live better lives.

We can only do that if we step away from the mirror or the "selfie" camera and take some time to look out the window or through the lens at others, what they need and what they are interested in.

As we do this, we end up caring so much for other people that we are filled with joy in loving and living for them, no longer so preoccupied with just getting what we want.

This is called "maturity."

For most people, this happens when you are starting to act more like an adult and less like a child.

For us in the family of God, this happens when we start acting more like Jesus.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What role does music or singing play in your life of following Jesus? Do you have some favorite worship songs? Do you have a worship playlist?
2. What is one way you can pay more attention to others this week so that you can help them and serve them? in your home? in your school? in your community?
3. If you truly practiced this kind of sacrificial and humble love, how might that change things in your family? with your friends?

Read Ephesians 6:10-24 - Explanation of the Armor of God

10 *A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil.*

12 *For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.*

13 *Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. 14 Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared.*

16 *In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. 17 Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

18 *Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.*

19 *And pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words so I can boldly explain God's mysterious plan that the Good News is for Jews and Gentiles alike. 20 I am in chains now, still preaching this message as God's ambassador. So pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should.*

21 *To bring you up to date, Tychicus will give you a full report about what I am doing and how I am getting along. He is a beloved brother and faithful helper in the Lord's work. 22 I have sent him to you for this very purpose—to let you know how we are doing and to encourage you.*

23 *Peace be with you, dear brothers and sisters, and may God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you love with faithfulness. 24 May God's grace be eternally upon all who love our Lord Jesus Christ.*

TEACH

We can get distracted here by the armor talk.

Here's the focus for Paul: as we strive to live more and more like Jesus, we are going to be attacked by Satan.

To defend ourselves from this attack, we need to develop characteristics that are as much of us as a soldier's armor and gear are for him in battle.

Most of the armor language here is for defense.

The belt of truth holds all the pieces together.

We are protected not by our own righteousness, but by the body armor of *God's* righteousness.

Our shoes are the readiness to share the Good News of Jesus that Paul spent the first half of this letter writing about.

Like Captain America, we have a shield that is our faith.

The salvation we received as a gift from Jesus is our helmet.

And then our weapon for attacking is reading, studying, knowing, and following what is written in the Bible, including this letter!

And Paul concludes his letter by talking about prayer, asking for prayer, and exchanging greetings and God's blessing.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How often do we focus on the "enemies" we can see?

What can you learn from Paul here about our *real* enemy?

2. It seems like so much of this armor has already been described earlier in Paul's letter.

Talk about one piece or the whole set of gear and what it looks like practically to use this in your everyday life.

3. Soldiers train to know how to use their weapons well. If we are to fight off Satan's attacks by how well we read, study, know, and obey Scripture, we probably need to make sure that is a significant habit in our everyday lives.

What is a step you can take this week to make Bible reading and study a daily habit? How can we as a group help each other with this?

(Bonus tip: Pick a Bible reading plan, like one of the Gospels, and keep this study going together!)

SUMMARY OF EPHESIANS

Paul wrote a powerful letter full of both vivid, creative language and practical actions to remove the evil in our lives and to live more like Jesus.

Paul spent almost half of the letter focused on the Good News of Jesus and the amazing lengths God went, not to reward us for our behavior, but to offer us rescue from Jesus, mercy (not getting the punishment we deserve), and grace (getting the gift we don't deserve) being both forgiveness for our sins and the Holy Spirit living inside of us.

Then, in the second half of the letter, Paul wanted to really stress how a diverse group of people with differences in politics, socioeconomics, ethnicity, etc. can all come together in unity to be the beautiful family of God with Christ in charge.

As we learn more about Jesus, His teaching, and how He lived His life, we can know better the example we are to follow and become more and more in every way like Him.

We need to remember Paul's warning that the more we become like Jesus, the more we'll face attacks from our real and spiritual enemy the devil.

And so, Paul closes his letter challenging and encouraging us to live holy lives, just like Christ.

And as we finish this study today, you have a challenge.

Are you just leaving this week with just more information about an old book?

Or are you equipped and challenged to take the necessary steps to remove what distracts you from Jesus and put on what helps you to live more like him so that the Good News of Jesus story comes out as a significant part of your story?!