



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V22 N1 January 5, 2020

“New Clothes for the New Year ” Ephesians 4:17-24

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Single-mindedness

I focus on God and his priorities for my life.

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

Matthew 6:33



How should we then live?

One's identity implies one's conduct; in turn, one's conduct expresses one's identity. The two are inextricably linked. Now identity is a complex matter. Just consider how you would answer the question, “Who are you?” You might reply by giving your name, but your name alone would hardly do justice to your full identity. You are so much more than what people call you. Recognizing as much, you might go on to give more information about yourself, like your age, physical description, marital status, education, and employment, to mention just a few. For example, “I’m so many years old, this tall, and weigh that much. I’m married with two small children. I’m a university graduate. I’m a Christian.” Theoretically speaking, if you were able to describe yourself using a sufficiently large number of traits, you would distinguish yourself from everyone else on the planet.

Each of these discrete *traits* or *aspects* of identity logically imply conduct of one kind or another. Again, for example, identifying yourself as a physician would necessarily imply a certain kind and level of knowledge, as well as, specific conduct *related* to your profession and specific conduct *consistent* with your profession. Regarding the first, saying that you had no patients would likely prompt a question as to *why not*, since doctors normally treat patients. Regarding the second, saying that you use tobacco products would likely prompt a question as to *why*, since doctors normally know better. Both statements would surely undermine your integrity as a physician.

Identifying oneself as a Christian similarly implies certain beliefs and behaviors. Commenting on their conversion experience, Paul tells believers in Ephesians 4:22-24: “You took off your former way of life, the old self that is

corrupted by deceitful desires; you are being renewed in the spirit of your minds; you put on the new self, the one created according to God's likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth” (HCSB). Commenting on the apostle's instructions that follow, one commentator writes:

“Therefore, Paul continues, ‘each of you must put off . . .’ (verse 25, NIV). That is, because you did throw off your former self once and for all, you must now throw off all conduct which belonged to your old life. Your new behaviour must be completely consistent with the kind of person you have become. As we have already noted, the metaphor (‘putting off’ and ‘putting on’) is drawn from the way we dress. It can now be elaborated.

“The kind of clothing we wear depends on the kind of role we are fulfilling. For example, when we go to a wedding, we wear one kind of clothing; when we go to a funeral, we wear another. The custom of adapting our dress to suit the occasion stands as a general principle. Many peoples' dress is also determined by their job. Soldiers and sailors wear different uniforms . . . So do prisoners and convicts. But when we change our role, we change our dress. When prisoners are released from custody and become free people again (putting off one role and assuming another), they change what they are wearing (putting off prison garb and putting on ordinary clothes). Just so, since by a new creation we have put off the old humanity and put on the new, we must also put away the old standards and adopt new ones. Our new role will mean new clothing, our new life a new ethical lifestyle” (John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, TBST, 183). Put differently, our focus changes once we are saved. Rather than focus on ourselves and our priorities, we focus on God and his priorities for us.

17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. 19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

20 That, however, is not the way of life you learned 21 when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

READ in another translation

17 Therefore, I say this and testify in the Lord: You should no longer walk as the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their thoughts. 18 They are darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them and because of the hardness of their hearts. 19 They became callous and gave themselves over to promiscuity for the practice of every kind of impurity with a desire for more and more.

20 But that is not how you learned about the Messiah, 21 assuming you heard about Him and were taught by Him, because the truth is in Jesus. 22 You took off your former way of life, the old self that is corrupted by deceitful desires; 23 you are being renewed in the spirit of your minds; 24 you put on the new self, the one created according to God's likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth. (HCSB)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle "Gentiles" in v. 17.
- Circle "futility" in v. 17.
- Box "because" indicating *reason* in v. 18.
- Box "so as" indicating *result* in v. 19.
- Circle "sensuality" in v. 19.
- Bracket "they are full of greed" in v. 19.
- Box "however" indicating *contrast* in v. 20.
- Underline the three "to" (infinitive) phrases: "to put off," "to be made new," and "to put on" in vv. 22-24.
- Circle "self" in vv. 22 and 24.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What is one thing you do not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. On *what* does Paul insist?
2. “Gentiles” carries a moral and spiritual connotation in verse 17. To whom are “Gentiles” *morally* and *spiritually* comparable today?
3. Give an example of Gentile “futile thinking.”
4. Put what “darkened in their understanding” means in your own words.
5. Is the “ignorance” behind Gentiles’ darkened understanding and separation from the life of God willful ignorance? Explain.
6. What has “greed” got to do with their indulgence in impurity?
7. Paul’s description of Gentiles seems harsh. Aren’t there any *decent* Gentiles?
8. Explain the *contrast* (“however”) introduced in verse 20.
9. Identify the three things Ephesian believers learned in connection with their conversion listed in verses 22-24 (see HCSB).
10. *Contrast* the meaning of “old self” and “new self.”
11. **Discussion:** “You are being renewed in the spirit of your minds” refers to sanctification, the process we go through to become like Jesus. Talk about it

Commentary On The Text

“Be yourself” is good advice if given to believers in Jesus. It’s the advice Paul gives—in so many words—to Gentile believers in Ephesus (Eph 4:17-24). He tells them not to live “as the Gentiles do” (v. 17), but to live as believers in Christ who “took off the old self” (v. 22), “are being renewed” (v. 23), and who “put on the new self” (v. 24). The Greek text presents a problem for translators—evident in a comparison of the New International Version’s and Holman Christian Standard Bible’s translations of verses 22-24—and consequently, for interpreters. This time, the translators are not translating different Greek texts, i.e., words; they are translating the same words differently. For reasons stated in the accompanying note (see vv. 22-24 *to . . .*), I prefer the translation in the HCSB and therefore, interpret the passage accordingly. It’s a difficult problem that divides good interpreters.

Paul’s advice is built around a “before and after” contrast. Ephesian believers are not to live like *who they were* (vv. 17-19), namely Gentiles, but instead, to live like *who they now are*, namely Christians who are on their way to becoming like Christ (vv. 20-24). Paul paints with a broad brush; still, the portrait he paints of Gentiles isn’t a pretty one. Their emptyheaded thinking leads them nowhere morally, spiritually, and otherwise. They don’t understand what has been revealed and are denied the life God gives because of their willful obtuseness and indifference to the truth. Their futile thinking leads to futile living devoted “to promiscuity for the practice of every kind of impurity with a desire for more and more” (HCSB).

One commentator traces the Gentiles’ path to perdition this way: “If we put Paul’s expressions together, noting carefully their logical connections (especially *because of* and *due to*, both translating *dia*), he seems to be depicting the terrible downward path of evil, which begins with an obstinate rejection of God’s known truth. First comes *their hardness of heart*, then *their ignorance*, being *darkened in their understanding*, next and consequently they are *alienated from the life of God*, since the turns away from them, until finally *they have become callous and have given themselves up to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of uncleanness*. NEB has “They stop at nothing to satisfy their foul desire.” Thus hardness of heart leads first to darkness of mind, then to deadness of soul under the judgment of God, and finally to recklessness of life. Having lost all sensitivity, people lose all self-control. It is exactly the sequence which Paul elaborates in the latter part of Romans 1” (John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*,

TBST, 177).

Is Paul’s description too negative? Surely not all Gentiles are as bad as Paul says. Keep in mind the apostle is not denying the dignity of Gentiles as bearers of the image of God. The passage is not about human worth, abilities, or accomplishments. It’s about lifestyle. One commentator remarks: “The passage is a rejection of the Gentile way of life, not a rejection of the Gentiles as persons (which would be strange for one who saw himself as the apostle to the Gentiles, cf. 3:1). Paul’s statements here are both a rejection of the dominant lifestyle of the society in which the readers lived and a call for them to reject it. Furthermore, these are generalizing statements that describe the conduct of those who cut themselves off from the life of God” (Kyle Snodgrass, *The NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians*, 237).

Leaving his general description of their former lifestyle behind, Paul tells his readers to live like *who they are* and not *who they were*. He reminds them of what they were taught following their conversion—probably in connection with their baptism. What he tells them is similar to what he tells the Colossians. He tells the Colossians “You have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator” (Col 3:9-10)—which, of course, is the reason why they must rid themselves of various vices like anger, rage, slander, filthy language, and lying to each other. He tells the Ephesians: “You took off . . . the old self” (v. 22); “you are being renewed” (v. 23), and “you put on the new self” (v. 24)—which, of course, is the reason why they must no longer live as Gentiles. One commentator summarizes Paul’s logic this way: “Simply stated, Paul shows that the conduct of the old person is an integral part of the person. Conversely, the lifestyle and the position of the new person should be integrally bound together . . . The old person, found in Rom 6:6 and Col 3:9, is the preconversion unregenerate person. Paul then is teaching that, having been taught in him, believers should know that the old person according to the former lifestyle was laid aside at the time of their faith in the one who taught them, namely, Christ” (Hoehner, 605).

According to Paul, the “new self” is continually being renewed (v. 23). Put differently, the “new self” is continually being transformed until the believer is “conformed to the image of his Son” (Ro 8:29). This process of renewal that the believer undergoes is variously called: with respect to holiness, *sanctification*; with respect to spiritual development, *formation*; and with respect to training, *discipleship*.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 17 *Gentiles* Paul's original readers were predominately Gentiles, i.e., people who were not biological descendants of Abraham through Jacob, who were called "'uncircumcised' by those who call themselves 'the circumcision'" (2:11; cf., 3:1, 8). "The Jews were widely known in the ancient world as those who were circumcised. They were proud of the distinctive of circumcision, a God-ordained covenantal sign that goes back to Abraham (Gen. 17:9-14). Paul, in his pre-conversion days, was proud to state that he was 'circumcised on the eighth day' (Phil 3:5), and it seems that Jews were zealous to have Gentiles circumcised so that they could come under the covenant (Gal 6:12-13; cf. 5:2-6, 11; Phil 3:2-3) . . . The Gentiles were not only separate from Christ personally, which was true also of many Jews, but moreover, they had no national hope of the Messiah as did Israel. Israel had this hope because of OT revelation of the promised Messiah" (Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 354, 355).

v. 17 *futility* Wrongheaded thinking leads to wrongheaded living. "In the NT 'futility' (*mataiotēs*) is sometimes associated with idolatry, but the primary reference here is to 'good-for-nothing notions' (NEB) underlying irresponsible behavior" (A. Skevington Wood, "Ephesians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 11:61). "The 'futility of their minds' conveys the idea of not being able to perceive the revelation of God for which it was designed. Thus, its moral attitude or disposition prevents it from achieving its goal of proper moral decisions which are necessary for life (Rom. 1:18-32)" (Hoehner, 584).

v. 19 *sensuality* "The first noun [*aselgeia*] has the idea of 'licentiousness, undue freedom, freedom with no boundaries,' referring to sensual appetites . . . It is the performance of blatant acts with no consideration of personal standards or social sanctions. It is doing something openly with no shame . . . It is the practice of sin without concern as to what God or people think. It can be translated 'indecent conduct, indecency'" (Hoehner, 590).

v. 19 *greed* Cf., "with a continual lust for more" (NIV©1984); "greedy to practice every kind of impurity" (ESV); "without restraint" (GNT). "Greediness refers to an increasing desire for more and more. The point is sinful desires and passions are never satisfied" (*The NET Bible*, 28sn on Eph 4:19). The term (*en pleonexia*) is not necessarily associated with sexual misconduct, though the context here suggests it. It means the determination gratify self-interest at

all costs, regardless of the right and susceptibilities of others. NIV combines both possibilities: 'with a continual lust for more'" (Wood, 62). "The three words of [*aselgeia*] (indecency), [*akatharsia*] (impurity), and [*pleonexia*] (greediness) are a powerful combination used to describe unregenerate people as those who are totally consumed with themselves" (Hoehner, 592).

vv. 22-24 *to . . .* The role of the three infinitives in these verses is debated. "The core question is whether these are to be seen as imperatival in force or indicatives. If imperatives, they would read: put off the old man, be renewed in your mind and put on the new man. If indicatives, the teaching would be: you have put off the old man, you are being renewed, you have put on the new man. With imperatives, it would be an exhortation. With indicatives, it states a fact" (Darrell L. Bock, *Ephesians*, TNTC, 136-37). The NIV translates the infinitives as imperatives; the HCSB as indicatives. Bock interprets them as imperatives (see argument 137-37); Hoehner as indicatives (see argument *Ephesians*, 600-602). The similarity to Colossians 3:9-10 together with the fact that the "old self" is put off at conversion leaves me inclined to view them as indicatives (cf., HCSB). Hoehner writes: "It seems that the old person in the present context must refer to what we were before our conversion rather than what we presently are which needs to be laid aside" (602; see also John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, TBST, 180-83).

vv. 22, 24 *self* Lit., "man." "The 'old self (or man)' is the person the Christian was before his or her regeneration. That person was experiencing progressive (continually worsening) corruption because of desires that appeal to the physical senses . . . The 'new self' (or man) is the person the Christian is after he or she experiences regeneration" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Ephesians," 2019 ed., 98-99, planobiblechapter.org/tcon/notes/pdf/ephesians.pdf). On Romans 6:1-13, one commentator writes: "By 'old man' Paul means the unregenerate man or the person in his unregenerate state. Wuest says that 'the old man here refers to that person the believer was before he was saved, totally depraved, unregenerate, lacking the life of God.' Paul is teaching that the unregenerate man or person has been crucified or has died with Christ" (Renald E. Showers, *The New Nature*, 65).

Other Texts to Consider

Colossians 3:9-10

"Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator ."



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Don't live any longer like you used to live before you were saved, because you're a new person now, created to be like God in righteousness and holiness.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The "Living Questions" are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?
2. What does this passage teach me about myself?
3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

I know spring cleaning is a thing for some people, but I really love the end-of-year purge. For me, there's nothing more satisfying and therapeutic than a massive closet cleanout day during the holidays. Growing up, my grandmother was the expert closet cleaner. My MeMe would come take charge and the first rule of thumb would be to drag it all out. She would haul every toy and piece of clothing out into the open so we could see what we have, determine its usefulness, and get rid of the old things that no longer fit, were worn out, or were no longer useful, all while singing *We'll Work 'Til Jesus Comes*. She would then organize everything worth keeping and put it back in the closet while making room for the new. This is a small picture of sanctification for me. Get it out in the open, expose it for what it is, deal with it, and grow. As the calendar turns to 2020, what do you need to bring out to examine and change? What will your year-end purge reveal about your parenting or spiritual health? Maybe this is the time to stop yelling and begin speaking words of affirmation. Perhaps you need to reduce your time away and be intentional with the time you spend with your family. I don't know where you are on your journey, but I know we all want to be better parents. I'm cheering you on and praying for you as you throw away old habits and seek God's guidance as a new creation.

What Does The Bible Say?

What does the Bible say? Read Ephesians 4:17-24.

1. Paul says to put off your former way of life. What exactly are we to "put off" and why?
2. What are believers to put on?
3. Why should believers have a different attitude?

What Do You Think?

How can you renew your mind and change your attitude?

What Do You Do?

Believers become a new creation and God gives them the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Pick one fruit of the Spirit to work on this week. Pray each morning that God will fill you with this character trait and journal when you've made choices that reflect this fruit of the Spirit.

CORE COMPETENCY: Single-mindedness

I pay attention to what God thinks is important for my life.

MEMORY VERSE: Romans 12:2

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- _____ I completed my Bible Study
- _____ I memorized this week's verse
- _____ I brought my Bible to church
- _____ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME _____

GRADE _____

PARENT SIGNATURE _____

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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