

EPHESIANS

GOD'S PLAN FOR GOD'S CHURCH REVEALED

SERMON TITLE: Walk Worthy

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SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 4:17-32

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The Book of Ephesians is a beautiful picture of the spiritual blessings we have in Christ and as members together in Jesus' Church. When he arrived, Jesus revealed what was once hidden from us throughout the ages through the power of the Holy Spirit. As a result, we're introduced to something new—a life in Christ where we find THE answer to the brokenness of this world. But what should this look like? How should we, in the power of the Holy Spirit, live this new life? Jesus' church is meant to be a source of wholeness and life amidst a world of brokenness and death. What does this entail? What does it mean practically? In this letter to the Ephesians, Paul explains the mystery of the church and gives us practical insight into living as believers who have been raised from death to life by faith in Christ.

As we've studied through the book of Ephesians, there's a central theme that governs everything Paul has been saying. You could put it this way—*God is up to something big in this world and we have a big part in it.* From before time began, God predetermined to have a world, this world, populated by diverse peoples who live together in unity under the headship of Christ. Ephesians explains how God is accomplishing the first step of his great plan through his church. How so? God is making spiritually dead people alive through faith in Christ and he's placing them into his church—a new, unified community of people who are pursuing life and mission with Jesus. This is what God is up to in this world. It's what all of human history is about. And, you and I are a big part of God's plan for God's church being revealed today. —READ Ephesians 4:17-32—

In Ephesians 4:17-32, Paul builds on all of that and talks about how it translates into daily life. In vv17-24, he's basically saying—“Since God has made you new and b/c he has put you into his new people/his new humanity, don't live like people who don't know God. My mentor Haddon Robinson used to say—“You cannot live like you used to live because you're not the person you used to be.” That's a good summary statement. Then in vv25-32, it sounds like Paul gives us a bunch of “rules” to obey. “Do this, don't do that” imperatives (commands). However, these are not rules to follow. They are the natural out working of the new you God created you to be. He's describing the way of life that reflects what it looks like to pursue life and mission with Jesus carrying out God's big plan in this world. He's showing us how radically different the Christian life is from the lifestyles of people who don't know God and don't care to know God.

The question is—If we have been made new then why don't we live like new people? ...Why do we struggle so much with knowing what we ought to do and actually doing it? ...The problem is that even though you and I have trusted Christ as our Savior, and even though when we hear the Bible taught, we acknowledge that what it tells us is right and true—the fact is—very few of us think like new people. We understand what God wants us to do and what God wants us not to do, but we haven't yet developed God's perspective on all of life. Here's a principle I learned from Andy Stanley years ago. He said, “Biblical imperatives apart from biblical thinking result in short-term obedience and long-term frustration.” Biblical imperatives—the thou shalt's and thou shalt not's of Scripture—like all the commands in vv25-32—apart from biblical thinking always result in short-term obedience and long-term frustration. But when we learn to think biblically—when we learn to see ourselves and life from God's perspective—then all the commands and the do's and don'ts in the Bible begin to make sense. In other words, as we learn to see as God sees, we will do as God says. Or put another way, no one lives differently than they think. God says, “I have made you brand new and I have made you to be a part of the new humanity—a new, diverse, unified community of my people—and we know that factually—but mentally—we still have old humanity programming. And so functionally, the old programming makes us feel like and act like outsiders. Our minds—our mental programming—is still infected with and influenced by the same self-focused, self-indulgent worldly “futility of mind” that characterizes people outside the faith, even though spiritually, we've been made new. So, what's the answer?

Our minds have to be transformed so that how we think comes into line with what God has done in us spiritually—so that mentally we become what we are spiritually. And that is what “being renewed in the spirit of your mind” is all about (Eph4:23). Paul talks about this in many other places and especially in Romans 12:1-3 (READ). Paul knows the *tension* we live in. He tells us in Rom 7 that he knows what it's like to struggle with knowing what we ought to do, but then not do it. He says, “The things I know I ought to do, I don't do. And the things I know I ought not do, I do.” Paul knows that becoming a Christian does not *guarantee* life-change. Only mind renewal results in life-change. Becoming a Christian does not necessarily result in our becoming a *unified people who passionately pursue life and mission with Jesus in this world.* Only mind renewal is the path to living in the reality of the *new you* and *the new us.* A renewed mind results in a transformed life. Look at how Rom 12 and Eph 4 are basically saying the same thing. Rom 12:1-3 —*Do not be conformed*

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to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. ...Eph 4:17,23—Don't live like people who don't know God...but be renewed in the spirit of your mind.

Okay—so what exactly does “being renewed in the spirit of your mind” look like? How do I go about having my mind renewed? ...You have to *realize* something and you have to *rehearse* something. *First*, you have to realize that all your problems have one thing in common. Unforgiveness, worry, lust, pride, anger, discontentment, unbelief, failing to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace—all these “sins” have one thing in common and that is, we struggle to put the truth that we have learned in Jesus into practice. We know what we ought to do and not do, but we fail to live out what we know in our daily lives. We also have to realize that all our problems, to be overly simplistic, have one solution. And that is, “being renewed in the spirit of your mind.” Being renewed in the spirit of your mind is the way you put off all these old ways of thinking about God and life and faith and put on the new you God has made you to be. Okay, okay, okay, but how does mind renewal work? ...The second thing you need to understand is that all your problems have one solution: you mentally, daily rehearse the truth that you have learned in Jesus. One more time, you have to mentally, daily rehearse the truth that you have learned to see in Jesus. That’s what it means to be “being” renewed in the spirit of your mind. ...It’s the same idea as preaching the Gospel to yourself every day. It’s the same idea that Paul Tripp talks about when he talks about breaking the power of sin in our lives by worshipping our way out of our sins. In other words, you worship your way out of worry—you worship your way out of discontent—you worship your way out of unforgiveness and bitterness—you worship your way out of lust—you worship your way out of every sinful thought that dominates your thought life. Mind renewal is not automatic. It’s not like throwing a light switch. There’s no “one-and-done” mind renewal solution. No, having your mind renewed is your ongoing, daily, moment-by-moment service of worship. But over time, the ongoing practice of the process of renewing your mind will transform how you think and live. Remember—No one lives differently than they think. *You* will not live differently than *you* think—I won’t live differently than I think. That’s why Paul says, “Since you have put off the old and put on the new, every day be renewed in the spirit of your mind with the truth that’s found in Jesus.”

Community Group Questions

1. Ask: How many of you can identify with the story Charlie told about his first days in high school? When have you felt like an “outsider” who had to learn a bunch of rules that felt foreign to you? How did things change over time, as you identified more and more with your new environment, you began to feel like an insider?
2. How does that experience help you understand the Christian life?

READ Ephesians 4:17-32

3. How does what we’ve learned so far in Ephesians help shape what Paul says next in Eph 4:17-32?
4. To what exactly is Paul calling us in vv17-24? ...Why is this so crucial?
5. How do the “rules”/commands/imperatives of vv25-32 fit with what he has just said in vv17-24?
6. Why is it true that “no one lives differently than they think?”
7. How do you personally go about the process of being renewed in the spirit of your mind on a daily basis? ...How might you start being more consistent with this practice if it’s not a part of your walk with Jesus?