

encumbrance of fat tissue. This tissue serves no real function, except to drag down the rest of the body.

5. Paralysis—Although the mind is alert, certain parts of the body refuse to respond to directions and do nothing.
6. Spasticism—Although the mind and muscles are fine, there is a communication and coordination gap. Each member of the body is “doing its own thing,” without regard for anyone else.

### Study Questions

1. What was the role of apostles and prophets in the foundation of the church?
2. What is the work of the evangelist and the pastor and teacher?
3. What all is involved in “equipping the saints”?
4. What is the biblical concept of “ministry”? Have you decided to go into the ministry?
5. Does “unity of the faith” mean we will all have the same ideas about the Bible?
6. Jesus commended childlikeness (Matt. 18:1-4). What is it about children that Paul opposes?
7. Why can’t we combat Satan’s lies and tricks with a few clever schemes of our own?
8. What does the head do for the body?
9. What is the secret of making growth, according to verse sixteen?
10. Are all kinds of growth good?

11. QUESTION FOR ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Where do preachers fit in this picture of church leadership? Do they function in more than one category? Is it wrong to serve in more than one area? Did Paul himself do so?

## Lesson Nine (4:17-24)

### No Longer in Futility (4:17-24)

*17 Now this I affirm and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds; 18 they are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart; 19 they have become callous and have given themselves up to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of uncleanness. 20 You did not so learn Christ!— 21 assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus. 22 Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*

God has not only freed us from sin; he has also freed us from the futility of sinful living. In Christ Jesus it is possible to change human nature. The leopard can change his spots and the sinner can leave his foolish ways. The old life can be shed like an outgrown garment, replaced by the new nature of Christ.

**V. 17 Now this I affirm and testify in the Lord—**The importance of what follows is underscored by the solemn tone of this statement.

**that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do—**Most of Paul’s readers were in fact Gentiles by birth. In Christ, however, they were no longer Gentiles by nature. By nature they were new creatures, no longer participating in the old practices of the pagan life. That old life is described by Paul in these eight ways:

1. In futility of mind
2. Darkened in understanding
3. Alienated from the life of God
4. Ignorance
5. Hardness of heart
6. Callous
7. Given up to licentiousness
8. Greedy to practice every kind of uncleanness

**in the futility of their minds**—Apart from the wisdom of God, mankind does not know its origin, its destiny, or its present reason for existence. Neither is mankind able to cope effectively with life’s problems. Consider the following illustrations of futility in modern America:

<i>Problem</i>	<i>Futile Solution</i>
Crime	Nicer prisons
Avalanche of arrests for marijuana and prostitution	Legalize them
Venereal disease	Health clinics, Sex education
International tension	Buy friends; appease enemies

**V. 18 they are darkened in their understanding**—Sometimes it seems that the more men learn, the farther they get from a real understanding of life. The ultimate conclusion of futile thinking and darkened minds is graphically depicted in Romans 1:18-32.

**alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them**—The Gentiles were willfully ignorant of God (Rom. 1:28), cutting themselves off from the very Source of all life.

**due to their hardness of heart**—The Gentiles were guilty of stubborn rebellion in their hearts. As F.F. Bruce points out, in both classical and biblical literature, the heart “is viewed as the seat of the will and understanding, not of the emotions.”

**V. 19 they have become callous**—Literally, “insensitive to the pains of mind and body.” A similar idea is found in 1 Tim. 4:2.

**and have given themselves up to licentiousness**—Licentiousness is one of the works of the flesh in Gal. 5:19. It is the strongest Greek word for depravity, indicating a total disregard for decency, whether public or private. When men insist on this course of action, God gives them up to their base mind and improper conduct (Rom. 1:28).

**greedy to practice every kind of uncleanness**—Such men actually “covet” every kind of uncleanness. Uncleanness is also a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:19), indicating the kind of moral pollution that makes a man unfit to come before the presence of God.

**V. 20 You did not so learn Christ**—In parts of Asia Minor men were already beginning to develop a way of thinking called Gnosticism. They taught that the body is inherently evil and the mind is inherently good. Therefore, whatever vile actions the body performed had no effect on the mind and the inner man.

No such folly is taught in Christ. The mind and body are inseparably connected in acts of immorality. “Let no one deceive you. He who does right is righteous, as he is righteous” (1 John 3:7).

**V. 21 assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him**—Anyone who knows Christ knows that the pagan lifestyle is wrong. Both his life and his teachings set the perfect standard of purity.

**as the truth is in Jesus**—Truth was an important ideal in the life of Jesus, being used twenty-five times in the gospel of John alone. Jesus said, “You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). He also said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).

**V. 22 Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life**—The “old nature” is literally the “old man” who is dead because of our crucifixion with Christ (Rom. 6:6). This old nature must be “put off” just as the removing of a garment, so that the nature of Christ can be “put on” (verse 24). Only in Christ is it possible to be rid of the soiled and stained nature of our past.

**and is corrupt through deceitful lusts**—The natural state of man, once he has sinned, is thoroughly defiled and corrupt. He has followed his instinctive passions, only to discover too late they were actually “passions of error.”

**V. 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your minds**—The Christian life is not created by external rules (Col. 2:20-23), but by internal transformation. This metamorphosis happens through the renewal of the mind (Rom. 12:2). The process begins when the Spirit of Christ replaces the old self at one’s conversion (Gal. 2:20), and continues throughout the Christian life. The present tense of the verb in this verse might best be translated, “renew and keep on being continuously renewed.”

The remodeling and renovating of one’s life is not an instantaneous action, but a project still in progress. Remember that it was to Christians that Paul wrote, “Put off your old nature, be continuously renewed, and put on the new.”

**V. 24 and put on the new nature**—Once the “old man” has been taken off the “new man” can be put on. The filthy rags of one’s own righteousness (Isa. 64:6) are replaced by the white robes of the Lamb (Rev. 3:5; 7:9). This righteousness, however, must not be merely imputed to us in the heavenly ledgers, it must also be lived out here on earth (1 John 3:7).

**created after the likeness of God**—In the beginning man was created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27), but man sinned and fell short of the glory of

God (Rom. 3:23). Now in Christ there is a new beginning! The fallen sinner can be re-created in the image of his Creator.

**in true righteousness and holiness**—True righteousness is far more than man's feeble attempts at self-righteousness. It involves an inner transformation which is then expressed in a whole new life. In Christ the sinner is pronounced innocent and righteous, and is empowered by God's Spirit to live out the righteous life.

"Holiness" is the state of being "set apart." God's child is distinctive—not just one of the crowd. Holiness is not just a separation *from* something bad; it is a commitment *to* Someone good.

### **Living the New Life (4:25-32)**

*25 Therefore, putting away falsehood, let every one speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. 26 Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on you anger, 27 and give no opportunity to the devil. 28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his hands, so that he may be able to give to those in need. 29 Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for edifying, as fits the occasion, that it may impart grace to those who hear. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, with all malice, 32 and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

**V. 25 Therefore, putting away falsehood**—"Therefore" always points back to an earlier statement as the basis for what will be said. In this case that basis is the re-creation of the Christian in the likeness of God. If we are to be like God, who cannot lie (Heb. 6:18), we must put away all falsehood.

**let every one speak the truth with his neighbor**—The Christian must do more than avoid the outright lie; he must speak the truth. All half-truths are also half-lies! This emphasis on truth echoes verse 15 of this same chapter.

For those who would ask, "And who is my neighbor, with whom I must be truthful?" perhaps the moral of Luke 10:29-37 will be helpful.

**for we are members of one another**—We must not lie to one another in the Christian family because that pits one part of the body against the other. We must not lie to anyone outside the body, for when that lie is finally found out it will bring reproach not just on the liar but on the entire body.

**V. 26 Be angry but do not sin**—Anger is an automatic emotional response to insult or abuse. It is a

dangerous emotion because it so easily leads to sin. The scriptures never recommend anger or wrath as healthy emotions (see Matt. 5:22 and James 1:20).

Anger is a temptation, just like many other urges we feel. God does not blame us for feeling a sudden urge, but he does hold us responsible for how we handle that urge. The two specific ways anger can become sin are as follows:

1. We can unleash our anger and let it determine how we will act. When anger overrules one's spirit, sin will follow.
2. We can harbor our anger, storing it up and letting it boil inside us.

**do not let the sun go down on your anger**—Paul forbids both ways of dealing with anger. We must not unleash or nor harbor it.

Because pent-up anger eats inside a man like acid, most psychologists urge a person to spew that anger out at whoever made him angry. Having vomited out that rage, he will feel better. (But how will the one feel on whom he has vomited?) The only answer is to give our bitterness to Jesus and let him drink the bitter cup for us. He alone can turn bitter anger into better love.

**V. 27 and give no opportunity to the devil**—Both uncontrolled anger and pent-up resentment provide a place for Satan to operate. This is just the foothold he needs.

**V. 28 Let the thief no longer steal**—Then, as now, slaves and other workmen often thought they had a "right" to pilfer as much as they could get away with. The pagan society just shrugged off this failure of morality. Whether society demands it or not, however, the Christian shall not steal. God's morality is unchanged (Exodus 20:15).

**but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his hands, so that he may be able to give to those in need**—Paul has a two-step cure for the thief. It is surprisingly simple, but so far removed from modern penal practices that it seems absurd. To cure a thief, he must first be put to work. He must learn the dignity and rewards of honest labor. Second, he must learn that the rewards of his labor are to be shared with the needy. By learning the joy of giving he will lose the joy of taking. (If our modern methods were not already working so wonderfully well, it might be interesting to try this approach!)

**V. 29 Let no evil talk come out of your mouths**—Not even a fit of anger can justify evil talk. What comes out of a man's mouth defiles him, because it betrays what is in his heart (Matt. 15:11).

**but only such as is good for edifying**—To edify means to "build up." This does not call for constant

false flattery. Criticism can be edifying, when offered in the proper spirit to the proper person. It does mean that a Christian's words should be gracious and appealing (Col. 4:6).

**V. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God**—The Holy Spirit is a person, not a force. He speaks (1 Tim. 4:1), teaches (John 14:26), and intercedes (Rom. 8:27). He has feelings and can be grieved.

Perhaps there are many ways in which we can grieve this divine Indweller, but notice the immediate context of the verse preceding and the verse following. In context, we grieve the Holy Spirit by what we say!

**in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption**—The Spirit is a seal placed upon every Christian, in the sense of an identifying mark (see Eph. 1:13-14). The “day of redemption” is the time of the Lord's return, when the sons of God will be revealed (Rom. 8:19) and rescued from this present age (see Phil. 3:20-21).

**V. 31 Let all bitterness**—If we are to avoid causing grief to the Holy Spirit, there are certain things we must put out of our lives. “Bitterness” is sharp animosity or spite, nearly always in connections with speech. James reminds us that sweet water and bitter water cannot flow from the same spring (3:11), thus denouncing the bitter tongue.

**and wrath**—“Wrath” is the sudden outburst of temper (Gk. *thumos*). The Christian cannot justify his explosive temper by showing how quickly he gets over it. He must learn to stop exploding!

**and anger**—“Anger” is sustained, pent-up animosity. This is the Greek word (*orge*) normally used of the “wrath of God” (as in Rom. 1:18 and Eph. 5:6). God can handle this sustained anger against unrighteousness, but man cannot. It is for this reason God has said, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay” (Rom. 12:19). The Christian cannot applaud himself for his ability to store up wrath instead of exploding.

**and clamor**—“Clamor” is shouting out in anger.

**and slander**—“Slander” is from the Greek word *blasphemia*, which is usually translated “blasphemy.” The literal meaning of the word is “speaking against.” The usual context of the word is to slander that which one has no right to speak out against.

**with all malice**—“Malice” is a very broad and inclusive term for a totally evil disposition. It sums up the attitude that has no place in the new nature of the man newly created after God's own likeness.

**V. 32 and be kind to one another**—What a striking contrast to the ugliness of the preceding verse! The removal of all those vices does not leave an inner

vacuum, because God fills the Christian with kindness in their place.

Kindness is more than gentle politeness. The word also means “useful” and “serviceable,” having a flavor of action and productivity. For instance, God's kindness toward us (Eph. 2:7) was more than just pleasantness of attitude—it was the action God took to save us! We are “kind” to one another when we are taking positive steps to do something for the other person's well-being.

**tenderhearted**—If we are going to put on the new nature of Christ (v. 24) we must learn compassion (Matt. 9:36; 20:34). The Greek word used here originally had reference to the inner organs of the body, especially the heart, lungs, liver, and kidneys. This area of the body was noticed to produce strong feelings, even pain, when a person saw or heard of a tragedy. For this reason these organs were considered the seat of emotion.

To lack compassion was to “shut off” these organs against someone, as in 1 John 3:17.

**forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you**—The word used for “forgiving” here is directly related to the Greek word for “grace.” This word family includes the ideas of happiness, pleasure, favor, and goodwill. If we would forgive as God forgave, we must do it with a smile on our face!

If we find it hard to forgive, we should remember the parable Jesus taught Peter about forgiveness (Matt. 18:21-35). When a servant has been forgiven a debt of millions of dollars he should be glad to forgive a fellow servant a debt of a few dollars.

### Study Questions

1. Is it true that people without God live “in the futility of their minds”?
2. Why are such people alienated from God and lacking understanding? (See verses 18 and 19.)
3. Is it possible to put on the righteousness of Christ without making any effort to take off the old nature first?
4. What is the model for our re-creation? What will we look like when it is finished?
5. How does it injure the body of Christ when we lie?

6. Does God want us to be angry? What guidelines are given on how to deal with anger?
7. What is the remedy for a thief's sickness?
8. In what context does Paul say we should not "grieve the Holy Spirit of God"?
9. What is the difference between wrath and anger?
10. What are some specific ways in which Christians can "be kind to one another"? Name some instances in which you have received such acts of kindness.
11. How can we learn to be more forgiving?

## Lesson Ten (5:1-20)

### Walk in Love (5:1-5)

*1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

*3 But immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is fitting among saints. 4 Let there be no filthiness, nor silly talk, nor lewdness, which are not fitting; but instead let there be thanksgiving. 5 Be sure of this, that no immoral or impure man, or one who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*

As we put on the new nature of Christ we become imitators of God, children who resemble their father. Our way of life is in harmony with the nature of God. We walk in love, in light, and in wisdom—three of God's greatest characteristics.

**V. 1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children**—The word "therefore" points back to the preceding verses, especially verses 22 through 24. Being "imitators of God" is a natural consequence of

putting on the nature of Christ and being re-created in God's likeness. Although we are only "adopted" children (Eph. 1:5; Gal. 4:5), God's Spirit makes it possible to resemble our new Father!

**V. 2 And walk in love**—God is love (1 John 4:8), so we who would be like him must walk in love. Love means we give more than we take; we help more than we hurt. It means we care more about others' needs than our own wants. (See Eph. 2:4.)

God never asks us to do anything he was unwilling to do himself. He pioneered the way of forgiveness in the preceding verses, and Christ pioneered the way of love in this verse. Our duty is to "walk and keep on walking" (Greek present tense) in the way which God has pioneered.

**as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us**—These words are strongly suggestive of the Old Testament sacrificial system. The word "sacrifice" and the verb form of "offering" each appear over 70 times in the book of Leviticus alone. (See especially Lev. 1:13.) Christ is the fulfillment of these sacrifices, making complete and final atonement by his single offering at Calvary (Heb. 9:28; 10:12). This was the ultimate and only sacrifice God truly desired (Heb. 10:5).

**V. 3 But immorality and all impurity or covetousness**—If we walk in love, certain vices must necessarily be put out of our lives. "Immorality," or fornication, refers to general sexual promiscuity. It includes any sexual intercourse outside of marriage. "Impurity," or uncleanness, is any defilement that makes one unfit to come before the presence of God. "Covetousness" means literally "have-more-ness." It is the desire to have more and more and more. Perhaps the clearest English equivalent is simply "greed."

**must not even be named among you, as is fitting among saints**—In what way are these sins not even to be "named"? Perhaps it means that the saints should live in such a way that no one could charge them with these sins. More likely, in my judgement, it means that these sins are so unholy that they should not even be mentioned at all. They are unfit for the minds of the saints to dwell on, or the tongues of the saints to name.

Remember that "saints" are simply those who are "set apart" to God (Eph. 1:1) as Christians.

**V. 4 Let there be no filthiness, nor silly talk, nor lewdness**—"Filthiness" is the common Greek word meaning "shameful," and is applied here to our speech. Dirty, disgusting, obscene language is not appropriate to our new nature. "Silly talk" is literally "fool's talk." Remember that in the Bible the "fool" not only lacks wisdom, but also lacks knowledge of God (Psalm 14:1). "Lewdness" is closely related to silly talk. It refers to