

# Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ephesians 4:17-24

Ephesians 4:17–24 (NKJV)

*“17 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; 19 who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.*

*20 But you have not so learned Christ, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”*

Having communicated what Christ has done for us, Paul called the believers to live in Biblical spiritual unity with others in the family of God. Now he calls for every believer to live his or her life by a standard that testifies to the *“life of God”* we each enjoy. He desires that we walk in a way that brings glory to the name of Jesus.

We are not to do those things that distract from or diminish the testimony of Christ in us. Paul told Timothy, *“‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’”* 2 Timothy 2:19 (NKJV) Therefore, as believers we are called to a lifestyle that is other than the one we lived before coming to faith in Jesus.

In Proverbs we read, *“In mercy and truth atonement is provided for iniquity; and by the fear of the LORD one departs from evil.”* Proverbs 16:6 (NKJV) It is certain that our Lord provided the atonement for us *“in mercy and truth.”* It is now our privilege to fear and honor the Lord by departing from evil.

## **A New Way of Living**

Before coming to faith in Christ the Ephesians would have been accustomed to the lifestyle embraced by others in the culture. The Ephesians were Gentiles and therefore Paul uses the expression to identify the believers with others in their community. However, inasmuch as they are Gentiles, he makes a distinction between the now believing and the unbelieving. He identifies several characteristics that distinguish believers from unbelievers.

Paul shows that unbelievers walk in *“the futility of the mind,”* having their *“understanding darkened.”* When one is without a true Biblical understanding of God, the eternal purposes of God in creation, truth, salvation, etc. the activities of the mind and purpose of life become meaningless. If one believes he or she is a cosmic accident, that there is no Creator, and that death is the cessation of existence, it is impossible to believe there is any value or purpose in living. Furthermore, if one believes we are a cosmic accident – as described, they also have no basis for developing moral values and/or consequence for immoral behavior. Therefore, not only does the life of the one without understanding seem meaningless, but the life of others likewise. For this reason, the one who is *“alienated from the life of God,”* and by *“ignorance”* suffers *“blindness of heart,”* they will become those who Paul describes as *“past feeling.”* For example, these persons may steal, kill, or lie without restraint or conviction. Paul says they *“have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all*

*uncleanness with greediness.*” They become amoral (without morals) because there is no standard by which to guide principles, right or wrong.

A moral universe implies that we live in a universe ordered by God. Therefore there are consequences relating to our decisions and actions. Those who deny this fact see humanity no differently than a rock, a mountain, a plant, etc. However, we are created by God and to Him we will give account.

Therefore, as those who have been chosen in the Lord, we are called to a lifestyle of love and honor for God – and for our fellow man. We are called to live within the framework described in Jesus’ doctrine of love. He said, *“The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”* Mark 12:29–31 (NKJV)

This rule becomes us and is therefore the great litmus test for how to live!

### **What Every Believer Should Know!**

Paul tells the Ephesians that an amoral life is not what they have learned about the Christian faith. He said, *“But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus.”* (vs. 21-22) If we have been *“taught by Him”* implies the indwelling person of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit of God dwells within the believer and provides leadership and consciousness of good and bad, right and wrong. He leads us into all truth. Jesus said, *“When He, the Spirit of Truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.”* John 16:13–15 (NKJV)

When Jesus spoke these words to His disciples the Holy Spirit had not yet been given. However, now in the Church Age the Holy Spirit dwells in every believer and provides us the inner working and leadership we all need. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit has inspired the men who wrote the epistles wherein we are given direct instruction in the New Testament. This fact removes all doubt about how we are called to live.

### **Put Off**

Believers are given the power to put off the old man with its passions and lusts. Paul said that *“those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”* Then adds, *“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”* Galatians 5:24–25 (NKJV) This fact by no means indicates that believers will not fall short or fall into sin. We do! Furthermore, if and when they do, sinning does not suggest the loss of Salvation. However, it does indicate that we are given (by the power of the indwelling Spirit) power to live differently than we did before coming to faith in Christ. Therefore, there is no excuse for a believer living in intentional sin. We are (as stated above) called to live in and for the Lord.

For this reason Paul said, *“put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind.”* (vss. 22-23)

The renewing of your mind speaks to changing the way we think about sin. We are to have a change of mind concerning sin and sinful behavior. This is what is correctly stated as repentance concerning sin.

### **Put On**

As believers clothed in the righteousness of Jesus, we are not just called to put off the old man; we are called to *“put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”* (vs. 24) We are new creations in Christ! We have been made the righteousness of God – in Christ. We have been set apart unto the Lord for His glory and purpose.

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”* 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV) *“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”* 2 Corinthians 5:21 (NKJV)

### **Questions**

- 1) True or False: A genuine believer in Christ is called to walk in truth and obedience to the Lord.
- 2) True or False: Those who are unregenerated sin because they are sinners.
- 3) True or False: Those who are unregenerated don't always see their sin and are blinded by their own self-justification.
- 4) True or False: True believers can get angry because they are human. However, the true believer will do all they can to bring the anger to an end and offer forgiveness.
- 5) True or False: If I try hard enough I can be forgiving.
- 6) True or False: Putting off our old nature is easy for a Christian.
- 7) True or False: When reading the Word of God we learn more and more about Jesus!
- 8) True or False: If I have my own ideas about Jesus or about truth, my opinion is as important as what I read about in the Bible.
- 9) True or False: Evil speaking is sinful because it harms others.
- 10) True or False: I have been enabled to put off the old man and his deeds by the power of God Who is living within me. However, I still live in this body and as long as I do will fall short of the glory of God.