



# UPSTATE GROUP GUIDE

Fully Alive: Ephesians

May 11-17

Ephesians 4:17-32

## Things to Know

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## Studying God's Word *In Community*

*Reminder: The goal of group time is not to re-preach the sermon, but to understand and apply God's Word together.*

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## Sermon Recap

Ephesians 4:17-32 teaches us that real change doesn't come from trying harder, but from trusting who we already are in Christ. We are no longer defined by our old self, but by the new life God has given us. As our minds are renewed, our lives begin to reflect that reality in the way we speak, act, and relate to others. The Christian life is not about fixing the old—it's about living out the new.

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# Read

## Read Ephesians 4:17-32 and make observations about the text.

- What is God teaching us in the passage?
- What does this reveal about who God is, what God has done, and how I should respond?
- Which part of the text was most meaningful to you and why?
- What do you need help understanding about this passage?

# Scripture

## Ephesians 4:17-32

### The New Life

[17] Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk 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 sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. [20] But that is not the way you learned Christ!—[21] assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, [22] to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, [23] and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, [24] and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

[25] Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. [26] Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your 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 own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. [29] Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. [30] And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by 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, along with all malice. [32] Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. (ESV)

[The Holy Bible, English Standard Version](#). ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.  
Ephesians 4: 17-32.

# Living on Mission In Community

Living on mission as a group means displaying the reality of new life in Christ through the way we live together. Ephesians 4 shows that our witness is not just what we say, but how we love, speak, forgive, and serve one another. As a group, this means we help each other put off old patterns and put on the new life Christ has given us. We speak truth, extend grace, and build one another up, creating a community that reflects the transforming power of the gospel. When people see a group marked by honesty, generosity, and forgiveness, they see a picture of what it looks like to be made new in Christ.

*How is God leading me to respond to His Word this week?*

## Optional Breakout Questions

*Consider making time at the end of the group to break out into groups of 2-4 (keep them gender specific). Have them answer these three questions about their weeks:*

1. How did you feed yourself?
  - *(What have you been doing to feed your spiritual life, and how is it going?)*
2. How did you feed others?
  - *(How did you share the gospel or gospel truth with someone this week?)*
3. How did you feed your flesh?
  - *(What sins did you struggle with this week? How can your friends hold you accountable?)*

# *Leader Resources - May 11-17*

## **Small Group Curriculum - Ephesians 4:17-32**

### **1. Session Overview**

In Ephesians 4:17–32, Paul continues to call believers to walk in a manner worthy of their calling by addressing how real change happens. He contrasts two ways of living: the old self, shaped by futile thinking and sinful patterns, and the new self, created in the likeness of God. The issue is not merely behavior—it is identity. The old life is driven by a darkened understanding and disconnected thinking, while the new life flows from truth learned in Christ.

At the center of this transformation is the renewal of the mind. Paul shows that lasting change does not come from trying harder to fix the old self, but from believing and living out of the new identity already given in Christ. This inward renewal produces outward evidence, especially in how believers relate to one another. The Christian life is not about behavior management but about identity transformation that results in a new way of living in community.

### **2. Opening**

**Prayer:**

Father, we confess that we often try to change through our own effort instead of trusting what You've already done in us. Forgive us for living like our old selves.

Icebreaker question:

**Ask:**

“Have you ever tried to change a habit by just 'trying harder'? What happened?”

### **3. Scripture Reading**

Have someone read Ephesians 4:17-32 out loud.

## 4. Teaching Points (Systematic Walkthrough)

### Ephesians 4:17-19

In verses 17–19, Paul begins with a strong command: believers must no longer live like the Gentiles, whose lives are marked by futile thinking, darkened understanding, and separation from the life of God. He shows that the root problem is not just sinful behavior, but a corrupted way of thinking that leads to a hardened heart and ultimately to destructive living. This reminds us that apart from Christ, our lives are shaped by broken perspectives and misguided desires. The issue is deeper than what we do—it’s how we think and what we believe about ourselves and God.

### Ephesians 4:20-24

In verses 20–24, Paul contrasts this old way of life with the new identity believers have received in Christ. He reminds them that they did not “learn Christ” this way. Instead, they were taught to put off the old self, which is corrupted by deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of their minds. This renewal is the turning point of transformation—it is where truth replaces lies and where identity begins to reshape behavior. Paul then says to “put on the new self,” which has already been created in the likeness of God. This is not something we achieve, but something we live out. True change happens when we stop trying to fix the old self and start trusting the new identity God has already given us.

### Ephesians 4:25-32

In verses 25–32, Paul gives practical examples of what this new life looks like in community. Instead of lying, we speak truth. Instead of sinful anger, we deal with conflict rightly. Instead of stealing, we work and give generously. Instead of harmful speech, we use words that build others up. Instead of bitterness and malice, we walk in kindness, compassion, and forgiveness. These are not random commands, but evidence of a transformed life. Paul even reminds us that our actions can “grieve the Holy Spirit,” shifting our motivation from fear of failure to love for God. The new life is not about performance—it is about living in alignment with who we now are in Christ, especially in how we treat others.

## 5. Discussion Questions

1. What stands out to you most in Ephesians 4:17-32?
2. Why does Paul focus so much on the way we think, not just what we do?
3. What stands out to you about the difference between the “old self” and the “new self”?
4. How does renewing your mind actually lead to real change in your life?
5. Which of the practical examples (vv. 25–32) challenges you the most right now?
6. What does it mean to live “from” your identity instead of “for” your identity?

## 6. Application

This week, identify one area where you've been trying to "fix yourself" instead of trusting who God says you are. Write down a truth from Scripture about your identity in Christ and intentionally live from that truth each day.

## 7. Closing Prayer

**Prayer:**

"Father, thank You for making us new. Help us to live from that identity every day and to reflect Your grace to those around us. In Jesus' name. Amen."

## 8. Memory Verse

"and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."

Ephesians 4:24

