

## Ephesians 4:17-24 (NIV)

### Instructions for Christian Living

<sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> 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.

<sup>20</sup> That, however, is not the way of life you learned <sup>21</sup> when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. <sup>22</sup> 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; <sup>23</sup> to be made new in the attitude of your minds; <sup>24</sup> and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

## Ephesians 4:17-24 (HCSB)

### Living the New Life

<sup>17</sup> Therefore, I say this and testify in the Lord: You should no longer walk as the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their thoughts. <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> They became callous and gave themselves over to promiscuity for the practice of every kind of impurity with a desire for more and more.<sup>[a]</sup>

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

### Footnotes:

- a. [Ephesians 4:19](#) Lit with greediness
- b. [Ephesians 4:22](#) Or *Jesus*. This means: *take off* (as a command)
- c. [Ephesians 4:22](#) Lit *man*; = a person before conversion
- d. [Ephesians 4:23](#) Or *desires*; *renew* (as a command)
- e. [Ephesians 4:24](#) Or *minds*; and *put on* (as a command)

**Holman Christian Standard Bible - Study Bible<sup>1</sup>**  
*Ephesians 4:17-24*

**4:17-19** This section of the letter provides the practical outworking of [verse 1](#). Paul's exhortations denounced the readers' former way of life. The content of the exhortation clearly parallels early Christian baptismal practices of putting off old clothes before putting on new clothes to enter the baptismal waters. The picture is similar to one in [Col 3:5-11](#), except that the Colossians passage contrasts heavenly and earthly life. The Ephesians passage contrasts a person's former lifestyle and the new life in Christ.

**4:20-21** Paul pictures the truth totally in terms of the Messiah, who is the way, the truth, and the life ([Jn 14:6](#)).

**4:22-24** The apostle often described who believers already are, while also pointing to what they should strive to become. The practical paradox is that while freedom from sin's eternal penalty is already ours, freedom from the **former way of life** (a life of sin) comes only through our daily quest for obedience and purity. These are lifestyle commitments that every believer is called to make.

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1. Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., *HCSB Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Ephesians 4".

## English Standard Version - Study Bible<sup>2</sup>

### *Ephesians 4:17-24*

**4:17-24 Paul's Testimony.** Paul testifies to the new life in Christ experienced by the Gentile Christians of Ephesus.

**4:17-18** Paul affirms most solemnly **in the Lord** that his Gentile readers, as part of the new creation, should no longer live **as the Gentiles do** ([vv. 22-24](#); [Col. 3:9-10](#)). **futility of their minds... darkened.** Both in antiquity and today, people who reject the knowledge of God think of themselves as “enlightened” (cf. [Heb. 10:32](#)). Their **ignorance** here is not lack of general education; some are brilliant in their own way, but such brilliance is all wasted and futile in the end when combined with **hardness of heart** toward the truth of the gospel in Christ (cf. [Matt. 13:14-15](#); [John 12:40](#); [Acts 28:26-27](#); [Rom. 11:8](#)).

**4:22 put off your old self.** As Christians seek to do this, God makes it a reality, as seen in [Col. 3:9-10](#). Even Paul's Gentile readers can be part of the new creation in Christ. (As the ESV footnote indicates, “self” is the generic Gk. for “man” or “human”—perhaps an allusion to Adamic man apart from Christ.) [Ephesians 4:22](#) describes the negative side of regeneration, while [vv. 23-24](#) point to the positive side. **corrupt.** People need inner transformation because their hearts are “deceitful above all things, and desperately sick” ([Jer. 17:9](#)).

**4:23 renewed.** Paul expressed the negative side of the new creation in [v. 22](#) as putting off the “old self,” while [vv. 23-24](#) express the positive side as an entire transformation of believers' inner selves, focusing here on their **minds** (see also [John 3:3-6](#); [Col. 3:9-10](#)). Christians sometimes distinguish between knowledge of head and of heart, but the Bible shows that they should love and serve the Lord with all that is in them, including their minds, at all times ([Deut. 6:5](#); [10:12](#); [13:3](#); [Matt. 22:37](#); [Mark 12:30](#); [Luke 10:27](#)). The “renewal” or “transformation” of the mind ([Rom. 12:2](#)) is a process in which believers begin to think in new and right ways as they meditate on the truths of God's Word.

**4:24 put on the new self** (lit., “man”; see note on [v. 22](#)). Paul focuses on the individual aspect of the corporate “new man” as described in [2:15](#). Believers are **created** anew in Christ (see also [2:10](#)). Created **after the likeness of God** further shows the connection with the original creation in Genesis, where “God created man in his own image” ([Gen. 1:27](#); cf. [1 Cor. 15:49](#)).

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2. Lane T. Dennis, ed., *ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Ephesians 4".

## NLT Life Application Study Bible<sup>3</sup>

### *Ephesians 4:17-24*

**4:17** The natural tendency of human beings is to think their way away from God—leaving them "hopelessly confused." Intellectual pride, rationalizations, and excuses all keep people from God. Don't be surprised if people can't grasp the Good News. The Good News will seem foolish to those who forsake faith and rely on their own understanding.

**4:17-24** People should be able to see a difference between Christians and non-Christians because of the way Christians live. We are to live full of light ([5:8](#)). Paul told the Ephesians to leave behind the old life of sin, since they were followers of Christ. Living the Christian life is a process. Although we have a new nature, we don't automatically think all good thoughts and express all right attitudes when we become new people in Christ. But if we keep listening to God, we will be changing all the time. As you look back over last year, do you see a process of change for the better in your thoughts, attitudes, and actions? Although change may be slow, it comes as you trust God to change you. For more about our new nature as believers, see [Romans 6:6; 8:9](#); [Galatians 5:16-26](#); [Colossians 3:3-8](#).

**4:22-24** Our old way of life before we believed in Christ is completely in the past. We should put it behind us like old clothes to be thrown away. When we decide to accept Christ's gift of salvation ([2:8-10](#)), it is both a one time decision, as well as a daily conscious commitment. We are not to be driven by desire and impulse. We must put on the new nature, head in the new direction, and have the new way of thinking that the Holy Spirit gives.

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3. *Life Application Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 2004-2005.

## Life Essentials Study Bible<sup>4</sup>

### A Principle to Live By Ephesians #9: Building Up One Another

from Ephesians 4:7-16

**To become mature in Christ as local communities of faith,  
we must all function as members of one another.**

After the resurrection, the disciples went back to Galilee, where Jesus told them,

*Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, . . . teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you.”* ([Mt 28:19-20a](#))

A short time later, Jesus ascended back to heaven, promising that the Holy Spirit would empower them to be “witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” ([Ac 1:8](#); see also [Eph 4:7-10](#)).

When Jesus “ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things” ([v. 10](#)), these 11 men and a number of other members of Christ’s body were gifted and empowered to carry out the Great Commission ([Ac 2:43](#); [6:7-8](#); [8:4-8](#)). Thus, Jesus “gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers” ([Eph 4:11](#)), not only to launch local churches, but to train all believers (the “saints”) to do “the work of ministry” ([v. 12](#)). Then and only then will local communities of faith become mature and reflect Christ’s character.

Whatever our interpretation of this section of Ephesians, we must not miss Paul’s focus. These gifts were given to launch the church so that all believers can use their gifts and abilities in local communities of faith to build up the body of Jesus Christ ([v. 16](#)). We are indeed “members of one another” ([v. 25](#)). God designed the body of Christ to grow “in love” when every “individual part” functions properly ([v. 16](#)).

#### Reflection and Response

**How does God’s plan for building the tabernacles in the wilderness compare with God’s plan for building up the body of Christ?**

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4. Gene Getz, *Life Essentials Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2011), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 1630.