

## STUDY EIGHT | EPHESIANS 4:17-5:2

### REPENTANT

This passage continues Paul's instructive section, in view of God's global plan of redemption through the Son, now applied to believers, through the church, by the Holy Spirit (chs. 1-3). Paul has begun to show us more concretely what God's great redemptive plan looks like worked out in everyday life, since the start of chapter 4. He hones in on the pattern of repentance in 4:17-5:2. According to these verses, repentance involves three distinct things: (1) *Recognition* of past sins (2) *Replacing* old ways with new ones; and (3) *Recommitting* to God's new ways.

#### 1. Recognise past sins (4:17-19)

Paul describes what life is like for a person who hasn't experienced the life-transforming power of God. Their thinking is 'futile' (v 17), 'darkened' and 'separated from the life of God' (v 18). Unaware of the greater and deeper purpose of God, they cannot recognise the evil of their sin. But Paul is quick not simply to make it an intellectual issue, for the *underlying cause* to their futile thinking is 'the hardening of their hearts' (v 18). This hardening of heart leads a person to give 'themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity' (v 19). Sin is not liberating but a prison cell. From the heart to the head and out to life. This is the process at work in a person's lifestyle. The difference is God (2:4-5). Paul rebukes us, warning us not to go back to the prison cell of sin.

#### 2. Replace old ways with new ones (4:20-24)

A person who experiences the power and grace of God invariably experiences total life transformation. But there is no transformation without learning the truth 'that is in Jesus' (vv 20-21). This learning leads to conscious effort on our part. Paul describes this transformation in terms of a clothing analogy. Just like we put off old, dirty clothes in order to put on new, clean ones, so the Christian life consists in consciously putting off the old way of life 'corrupted by its deceitful desires' i.e., harmful not only to others but to ourselves (v 22). We trust our selfish desires way too easily. But it also consists in 'putting on' the new way of life Jesus teaches us i.e., to be 'like God' in his desire and ability to do what is right (vv 23-24). This inevitably sets one apart from the ways of this world.

## A NEW HUMANITY

APRIL 25

EPHESIANS 1:1-14 REDEEMED

MAY 2

EPHESIANS 1:15-23 RESURRECTED

MAY 9

EPHESIANS 2:1-10 RESTORED

MAY 16

EPHESIANS 2:11-22 RECONCILED

MAY 23

EPHESIANS 3:1-13 REVEALED

MAY 30

EPHESIANS 3:14-21 RENEWED

JUNE 6

EPHESIANS 4:1-16 REBUILT

JUNE 13

EPHESIANS 4:17-5:2 REPENTANT

JUNE 20

EPHESIANS 5:3-20 REGENERATE

## RESOURCE



RICHARD COEKIN | EPHESIANS FOR YOU

(GOD'S WORD FOR YOU SERIES)

We might tend more so to focus on the first step of ‘putting off’ the former ways. But biblical repentance not only involves removing sin but replacing it with desires and decisions that are aligned with what Jesus values and accord with his life-giving purposes. Our minds, our understanding, our perception of the world is key (v 23). It’s a matter not only of knowing the right way but *being convinced* by its goodness and being compelled to follow it. This requires God’s power to ‘renew’ our minds (cf. Romans 12:1-2).

### 3. **Recommit to God’s new ways (4:25-5:2)**

The practise of changing clothes, so to speak, is an ongoing commitment and we all work through these things in accordance with the grace Christ has given us (4:7). Paul provides examples of this in key areas of life so we can see the pervasive effects of sin but also as a striking measure of the change and progress God brings: from lying to telling the truth (v 25). From rage to righteous anger (vv 26-27). From stealing to generosity (v 28). From hurtful speech to helpful speech (v 29-30). From a fundamental disposition of malice, to one of forgiveness and grace (vv 31-32). In summary: following Christ’s example in ‘the way of love’ (5:1-2).

## GETTING STARTED [CHOOSE ONE]

1. **What do you think is the purpose of biblical commands in the Christian life?**
2. **What changes can you note that God has made in the life of a fellow believer? (No need to name names)**

***Link:*** *Repentance is the God-enabled, ongoing, pattern in a Christian’s life of turning from their sins and trusting in Jesus. In this passage Paul describes this process to help us ‘act this miracle’ of God’s transformative work.*

## INTO THE TEXT

### READ EPHESIANS 4:17-19

1. Where does the life marked by ‘indulging every kind of impurity’ begin?
2. Are we led by our heads or our hearts? Discuss, in the light of verses 17-19

### READ EPHESIANS 4:20-24

3. Paul here describes repentance in terms of a clothing analogy. What would happen if we only committed ourselves to ‘putting off’ and ignored the ‘putting on’ side of repentance?
4. Describe the characteristics of ‘the new self’.
5. What do you think it means to act in accordance with ‘true righteousness and holiness’?

### READ EPHESIANS 4:25-5:2

6. In these verses, Paul gives us examples of what this ‘putting off/on’ way of life looks like. Pick one or two examples and discuss the harmful impacts of ‘the old way’ with the helpful impacts of ‘the new way’.

7. How do you think the misuse of anger (v 26) is connected with giving the devil 'a foothold' (v 27)?
  
8. We could summarise Paul's list as moving from the old way to 'the way of love' (5:2). What aspect of God's 'way of love' does Paul focus us on? Why do you think that is?

## TAKEAWAY

1. Pick an example from Paul's list in 4:25-32 that you think applies especially to you. What progress have you seen God make in your life in this area? What might be your next step in ongoing progress? Consider sharing this with select members in your small group so you can pray for one another, giving thanks to God for the progress and committing to God the ongoing need to grow.