



Ephesians 4 v 17 - 5 v 1

Pure hearts and lives – Leader's version

For an hour study, just do the starred * questions

Check in – ask everyone, including leaders, how they are and how they're feeling about studying the Bible today.

What does the passage say and mean?

60 minutes

Read Ephesians 4 v 17 - 5 v 1

1. **SHOUT-OUT** In v17 the Bible says Christians should not live as unbelievers do. Why do you think this is?

Write their answers on the flip-chart, but don't try to come to a 'right' answer.

*2. What does Paul say about people who do not know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour? (v17-18)

Their thinking is futile (pointless) – it doesn't matter how clever you are, you can't think your way to salvation (see 1 Cor 1 v 25). Without God, nothing ultimately makes sense.

Their understanding is darkened (wrong), and they remain separated from God because they have not believed in Jesus. Their hearts are hardened to the gospel.

*3. Why is being separated from God and living a life like this the biggest problem people have?

A chance to explain the gospel!! Mankind was created by God to live in relationship with Him. We sinned. Sin separates us from God because He is a holy God. Sin causes death. Ongoing separation from God after death is hell. (Save the good news for answering q5!)

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Do you recognise yourself to be in this position?

*4. What happens to the lifestyle of people who don't believe? (v19)

They are not sensitive to the voice of God so their lives revolve around sensuality (pleasing themselves, making decisions that put self first), they indulge in impurity (do things that are wrong in God's sight) and lust (long) for more of the same. They live their lives as if they are king of their life, not recognising the King of their life.

*5. Read v20-21. What is 'the truth that is in Jesus'?

Jesus is the Son of God who He became man and lived a sinless life. He died on the cross in the place of repentant sinners, taking God's anger at our sin on Himself, in our place. All who believe that Jesus died for them are forgiven, restored to relationship with God, and know they have eternal life.

Questions 6-8 are **SELF-DIRECTED QUESTIONS**. Let the group to work on in pairs.

*6. **SDL** Read 4 v 22-24. What 3 things are we taught?

- *To put our old self / way of life behind us*
- *To have new attitudes and minds*
- *To put on the new self, which is like God in its righteousness and holiness. (Eph 4 v 25 – 5 v 1 will explain what 4 v 24 looks like in our lives).*

*7. **SDL** What do you think these three things mean in practice and who causes it to happen?

- *To put our old self / way of life behind us = repentance*
- *To have new attitudes and minds = conversion*
- *To put on the new self, which is like God in its righteousness and holiness = discipleship*

This can only happen through Jesus – we can't do it ourselves, although we do have responsibility to make decisions about our life and our ways.

*8. **SDL** Read v25-32. In what ways do we change as we put off the old self and put on the new?

Truth telling v25, resolving disputes v26, not holding grudges v27 etc. Paul gives a (non-exhaustive) list of things to shed, like a snake sheds its skin, and tells us how we should instead behave.

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The process of being 'made new in the attitude of our minds' isn't finished until we get to heaven. In what ways are you aware of the attitude of your mind changing?

9. Why should we tell the truth, and do you think v25 means we should only tell the truth to other Christians?

Because it is wrong to lie (Exodus 20 v 16) and it dishonours God. No, this verse doesn't mean we only tell the truth within the body of Christ! (If there is doubt about this, consider the parable of the Good Samaritan – how did Jesus define 'your neighbour'?)

*10. **STICKERS** Read v27. What's the problem with holding grudges?

If we hold a grudge, it lets the devil get a foot in the door, and he'll step further in. Grudges lead to anger and resentment, which lead to other sorts of trouble. By definition, if we are holding a grudge, we have not forgiven the other party, and we are told to forgive – see v32.

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How do might you be able to stop yourself from sinning when you are angry?

i.e. What do you need to do in order to step back from a situation? Suggestions include count to 10 before replying, walk away from the situation, pray, breathe slowly etc.

11. What kind of language should believers use and why (v29)?

Language that builds other people up according to their needs, so it benefits other people, not ourselves.

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Does 'unwholesome talk' come out of your mouth? Do you want this to change, and what are you going to do about it?

*12. Read v31. Why do our *emotions* need to be changed by God, and not just our words?

Because our words reflect what is in our hearts. If we just change our words, the bitterness, anger etc is still in us, eating us up, and it will spill out eventually. Nothing has really changed if we are just different in behaviour but not in attitude.

*13. **STICKERS** Read v32. What does it mean to forgive someone?

Spend some time answering this one as it's a big issue for prisoners. Forgiving someone is to let go of the grudge / anger / resentment you have in your heart against them (even though you may still have the pain and consequences of whatever they did). We don't always have the opportunity to tell the other person that we have forgiven them. We have been forgiven for all our sins by God, and this is why we should forgive other people – what they have done against us may be massive, but so is the sin for which God has forgiven

us. It's difficult to forgive, and it's not unusual to have to forgive someone repeatedly, but as we let go of the anger / resentment / grudge we free ourselves from bondage and find we can start to move on.

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Is there someone you need to forgive?

NB. This may need careful handling, and you may like to suggest further discussion with a Chaplain. Don't give any false hope about contacting anyone inside or outside the prison – it may not be possible / permissible.

14. When changes like these start to happen in our lives, our character starts to reflect someone else's character – whose? (5 v 1)

God's / Jesus'

NB. Verse 17 reminds us that this letter is written to Christians – remember that we cannot expect non-believers to live in the way that Paul commands Christians to live.

15. How does God feel about us (5 v 1)?

He loves us dearly.

NB. We are not dearly loved because of our character / attitude change – we are dearly loved anyway. We do not become more lovable as we become more Christlike, since God loves us unconditionally.

Check out – ask everyone, including leaders, how they found the study and if they are safe to go back to the cell.

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Do you recognise yourself to be in this position?

4. What happens to the lifestyle of people who don't believe?
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6. Read 4 v 22-24. What 3 things are we taught?

7. What do you think these three things mean in practice and who causes it to happen?

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