

RENOVATE TOXIC WALLS

Ephesians 4:17 – 5:3
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MESSAGE NOTES

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.

— Ephesians 4:17 – 32

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. 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. — Ephesians 4:18 – 19

1. There's a pervasive sickness called sin. (4:17 –19)

Our society is filled with people for whom the sexual relationship is one where body meets body but where person fails to meet person; where the immediate desire for sexual gratification is satisfied but where the deeper need for companionship and understanding is left untouched. The result is that the relationship leads not to fulfillment but to a half-conscious sense of incompleteness, of inner loneliness, which is so much the sickness of our time. — Frederck Buechner

*Our commitment to make our lives work apart from God is incredibly creative and tenacious. Our capacity for self-deception and hardness is deeper than we can imagine. ... We should never be shocked by sin — either in ourselves or others. It is a miracle that anyone ever repents and comes to Christ. And God can and does change our own lives and the lives of those we work with — but that change is gradual and erratic. — Chuck Swindoll, *Three Steps Forward, Two Steps Back**

That, however, is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ and were taught in Him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. — Ephesians 4:20 – 21

2. There's a renovation that comes with knowing Christ. (4:20 – 24)

*I am wired by nature to love the same toys that the world loves. I start to fit in. I start to love what others love. I start to call earth "home." Before you know it, I am calling luxuries "needs" and using my money just the way unbelievers do. I begin to forget the war. I don't think much about people dying without Christ. Missions and unreached people drop out of my mind. I stop dreaming about the triumphs of grace. I sink into a secular mind-set that looks first to what man can do, not what God can do. It is a terrible sickness. — John Piper, *Don't Waste Your Life**

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; to be made new in the attitude of your minds. — Ephesians 4:22 – 23

Put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. — Colossians 3:10

Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh. — Romans 13:14

But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. — Ephesians 5:3

3. There's that new house smell in the air. (5:3, 11 – 12)

“Christian obedience should always be based on surrender to a person, not simply acceptance of an obligation. It is surrender to love, not submission to a duty. Too often people see Christianity in terms of rules and morality — a system of obligations and prohibitions. This entirely misses the point of Christ-following. Christian obedience is more like what lovers give each other than what soldiers give their superiors. Lovers demonstrate their love by doing what each other wants. ... We should obey God because He has won our hearts in love. If He has not, our focus should not be so much on obedience as on knowing His love. — David Benner, Surrender to Love

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Read back over Ephesians 4:17 – 5:3.
- Over the next couple of weeks, we'll be looking in more detail at specific parts of this passage.
- For now, how would you express in your own words the main point of this section?
- In what ways were we guided by “futile thinking” before we came to know Christ?
- Paul uses words like, “darkened in understanding” and “separated from life.” Can you share from your own experience something about what life was like for you prior to your faith in Christ?
- Thinking about v. 19, how do you see a loss of moral sensitivity in our culture today?
- This section describes how we are active participants with the Spirit of God in our own spiritual formation. How would you describe that process in verses 20-24?
- Why do think sexual immorality is so destructive?
- What do you think God means by the warning in 5:11 not to have anything to do with the “fruitless deeds of darkness?”
- How do we appropriately “expose darkness?”
- Obviously the passage is contrasting two life trajectories—one seeking to walk in the light and the other to be lived in darkness. Why are these fitting metaphors?
- What are some specific ways you're intentionally seeking to live in the light right now in your life?