

BIBLE SMASH!

Study: Ephesians 4:17-32

Memorize: Ephesians 4:29

Notes:

Analyze: The background information...

Topic: Trading an Old You for a New You.

Ephesians 4:17-32

In Paul's writings he is dividing the world in to two categories.

The first is the gentile world. The "sons of darkness". The world that does not know God. The world that sins and is trapped by its sins (or vices). They do what they want to because they do not know better, or do not care to know God.

The second group is the Christian world. The world that does know God. This world is trying to please God by doing what is right. they are living by good moral standards or virtues. (Some people have referred to us as the son's of light)

New Christians are often caught between doing what they used to do and doing what is right. Sometimes because they have not yet learned what is right and sometimes because sin can have a strong hold on our lives. Especially if we have lived in it for a long time. Additionally, teens have a hard time doing what is right due to peer pressure. Many times it is not that they don't know right from wrong but that they don't care they are doing wrong at the time they are doing it.

In the first century there were not government organizations set up to create welfare systems like here in the United

States. People that had a need but could not provide for it had to stoop to becoming beggars to hopefully receive enough to sustain their life. Because Jesus taught about taking care of the poor many new Christians would band together to create small unofficial charity groups that would help the needy. Those that had possession would sometimes sell what they had to get money for the poor and those that had skills sometimes volunteered their labor. Paul directly address those that have learned how to abuse the system of charity. (verse 28).

There is nothing wrong with being a person in need. There is nothing wrong with being a part of an organization that helps those in need. But when you come to an organization for help and you are helped to the point were it is possible for you to take care of your self, but you do not do so, then you are stealing from those that are helping you. And you are steeling resources from others that may legitimately need them. It can become a lot easier to take resources (food or money) from an organization so you can get by than it is to go and get a job yourself, and initially, you may even have less money than you did while you were receiving welfare from someone.

There were many people back then that were abusing the system of charitable groups of people. Paul is basically telling them, "You're stealing! Go out and get a job so that you, too, may help someone else."

Next Paul tells us to control our speech. He means two things by this. The first is to watch what we say. If we are not saying things to build others up then we shouldn't be saying anything about them at all. Yes, we all have faults, and some of us seem to have bigger faults, and you may know someone that is a total jerk. Just like your mom or dad used to say, "If you can't say anything nice, than don't say anything at all." Who knew you're parents were quoting scripture?

The second way in which we control our speech is to be careful when we speak. Make sure that we are not interrupting someone else. And make sure that we have given others a chance to speak as well.

Some very good advice comes from verse 26 were Paul tells us not to let the sun go down on our anger. Paul does not say "don't get angry". He says "don't stay angry". By allowing ourselves to harbor anger towards someone day after day we only give the devil a foothold on our live. And if we don't physically act on our anger we will surely act verbally though it - which can be just as damaging, if not worse, in some cases. Don't let your anger be a magnet to draw evil to you.

In verse 30 Paul tells us not to grieve the Holy Spirit. We are not exactly sure what he is talking about but here are two concepts we think Paul is trying to get across:

- 1) Do not give the Devil a foot hold in your life. Keep your life as clean as possible
- 2) Your personal behavior affects the work of the Holy Spirit among the

whole body of believers. or... the way you live your life (what you do, how you act and what you say) has an affect on the other Christians in your community.

Either way - don't make the Holy Spirit sad (or grieve) because of your behavior.

Before we became Christian we were committed to no one. We did what we wanted, with who we wanted, when we wanted. As Christians we must now be totally committed to being a part of the body of Christ. What we do affects other Christians and affects what non-Christians think of Christians. Your life can no longer be about "me" meaning only you. It must be about "us" meaning you and all those that are Christians with you.

We must also realize that just like a human being the body of Christ is continually changing and growing. As humans we enter this world as a baby, become a child, then a teen, then a young adult, then an adult, and lastly we become a senior. But we are always growing, and no one stage is better than another. A young person may have more energy, but generally lacks the wisdom that comes with age.

Through all of Paul's teaching he is not saying "make yourself in to a holy person." he is saying "make yourself in to a holy community". Community is key here. Yes, it is made up of individuals. And, yes, we should always be trying to improve ourselves, but we should be doing this to help improve ourselves as a community, not individually. They go together. A better community grows better individuals and better individuals create

better communities.

Share: Is there anything that you have learned that you would like to share with others or anything that you have learned from listening to someone else share? Write it here...

Honor: A Prayer

Dear Lord,

I want to make a difference in my community in my family, among my friends, in school, and in my church. I am willing to stand alone to make these changes if no one else is willing to stand with me. Please give me the strength to stand up for you ...even if no one else does. Help me to be obedient to the ways you have shown me I need to live. Help me to keep my faith in you strong and thank you for having faith in me.

-Amen

Leader's Guide: Questions for discussion...

Ephesians 4:17-32

- 1) What are some of the activities that people who are not Christians might do that we as Christians do not do. (obvious answers might be drinking, smoking, premarital sex)
- 2) Why don't we do these things? (God has asked us to be set apart - this is part of that) Are there advantages to not behaving that way? (Most of that stuff leads to bad things anyway. Bad health, bad relationships, bad behavior. We are not missing out on anything by not doing those things)
- 3) Paul makes a very distinct line between the two kinds of people in this world. What are the two categories of people? (Those that know God and those that don't)
- 4) Why do people that don't know God act different? (They don't know better) Why do we, as Christians, act different from them? (We know better - we are trying to be like Christ would be)
- 5) Do you ever find yourself acting like someone that is not a Christian? If yes, under what circumstances? What are some ways that might be able to be prevented?

Anger

- 6) In the previous question did you remember anger? While it is okay to be angry it is how you handle your anger that can get you in trouble. Are you ever angry at someone for a long time? (several days to several weeks?) What does verse 26 have to say about that? - ouch!
- 7) Name some situations that might cause you to be extremely angry. Now, as a group try to work through ways that might enable you to work through anger or holding a grudge. (Prayer and faith that God can remove the anger should be a large part of the answer)

Mooching (stealing)

- 8) Have you ever had someone ask you for money? What is the difference between when a friend asks you for money and when a beggar asks you for money?
- 9) If I have no money and ask you for help, by a donation of money or your time, is that

a bad thing? (let them talk about the answer a while - eventually you need to lead them to the answer that it is okay to be in need once in a while)

- 10) If you help me to the point where I can now help myself, is that good? What if I can get more from you helping me than I can by helping myself? Should I continue to ask for your help? (The answer is no - you should not ask for my help, you should continue working on your own and build yourself up to the point where you can help others)
- 11) Paul says that if you are asking for my help when you are able to take care of yourself that you are stealing from me. Do you agree or not? Discuss your answers. (This would be a good time to share about the welfare system set up back in the time of Paul or the welfare system today - be very careful not to put down anyone that is on welfare or that accepts help from other people. You may not have any of those types of students in your youth group but odds are your students will definitely know of people in that type of situation)
- 12) (optional question) How can you learn to be independent and help others if you are constantly receiving help yourself? (It's like saying you are living on your own while you still live in a room in your parents house. You may learn stuff from your parents while you live with them that will help you when you are out on your own but you are either on your own or you aren't)
- 13) What are ways you, as teens, can help other people? Do you know that you, as an age group, have the biggest influence on your friends than any other age group?

Speech

- 14) Would you rather have your best friend tell a big lie about you behind your back or punch you hard in the stomach? Which would hurt more? Which would cause more damage? (allow for some discussion. Ask students why they picked the answers they did.)
- 15) What is your definition of gossip? Do you ever gossip? Is it only gossip if the person you are talking about is not there? (no - it is gossip if they are there). Is it only gossip if the information is false? (no - it is gossip if it is true). Gossip is information that should not be shared about someone - whether it is true or false, whether they are there or not. It may be true that I have a bad habit, and I may be standing in a group of people with you - but that doesn't mean it is okay for you to share that bad habit with everyone.
- 16) Do you like it when someone cuts you off while you are talking? How do you feel? Is it okay to cut someone off if you already know what they are going to say? (no) Is

it okay to cut someone off if they are not as important as you? (no - and what makes you think you are more important than someone else?)

17) When we were back at the beginning of our discussion time did you include gossip as something that non-Christians do that Christians do not do? Is it more important to watch your speech than some of the other things you listed originally?

18) When you are being careful about your speech what are some things you are being careful about? (gossip, lying, politeness - interrupting someone, there may be other things also)

Who are these changes for?

19) Are all these things we talked about for us to change individually or as a body of Christ? (The real answer is both, but let the students debate one way or the other for a while - play the devil's advocate with them and take the opposite side on some of their reasons)

20) What can you do to help make the changes within yourself?

21) What can you do to help make these changes at your youth group or church?

22) How can these changes have an effect at school or in your community?

Credit

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