

## New Year. New You. Part 1

### Ephesians 4:17-24

**MPS** Jesus makes you a new creation to live by faith in His Kingdom under His Lordship for His glory now.

**OBJ** Every Christ-follower can understand the how to live the New You Jesus makes by Three Foundational Convictions.

**INTRO** On New Year's Day I searched for a new workout app. (Of course I did!) I wanted some exercises for my home gym. It's two years old, but practically new. So I searched "best exercises for Men 50+". Immediately a link appeared guaranteeing that I could still build muscle after 50. All I had to do was answer a few short questions and I would be ready to go. After the first 3 or 4 questions a box popped up that said according to my answers I qualified for a more thorough program, and if I wanted to continue click "Next". So, I did. After another 3 or 4 questions it pulled up a graph to calculate how fast I could obtain my goal weight. Only five months and I would have reached my goal weight. (The timeline seemed a bit long to me, due to the fact that my goal was not that high, or low, but I played along.) Next it said there was a way to make it happen faster with an even more personalized program. I only needed to answer a few more questions. (Hey – why not. I'm just going to work out if I'm not doing this. So it seemed okay.) This is when I got really suspicious. What happened next was a thorough psyche eval coupled with a therapeutic inquisition. It began to ask me really crazy stuff like, "Do you like to eat when you celebrate or are happy?" But, of course. "Do you eat when you get bored?" Yes! Because I am bored. "Do you eat to comfort yourself when you are upset". That's it, I thought. I can't stand any more. I grew up in the south where eating for comfort was more important than for sustenance. I clicked out and went and worked out. After all, my gym is still practically brand new.

**TRANS** Paul says physical training does have value for life. (1 Timothy 4:8) Today I want to address "New Year. New You." New Year always starts with work on the "new you". But the "New" I want to consider has value for all things. **What does it look like to invest in this "New You"?**

**Jesus makes you a new creation to live by faith in His Kingdom under His Lordship for His glory now.**

**READ** Ephesians 4:17-24

*Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. <sup>18</sup>They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. <sup>19</sup>They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. <sup>20</sup>But that is not the way you learned Christ!— <sup>21</sup>assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, <sup>22</sup>to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, <sup>23</sup>and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, <sup>24</sup>and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. **Ephesians 4:17-24***

**Review** Eph 4:1-16

**Paul begins Ephesians 4 by establishing Jesus as Lord.** He establishes His Kingdom by conquering death, hell, the grave, and the Evil One, to now rule supreme over all things. As Lord, Jesus gives gifts to His people for life in and the work of His Kingdom, and tells us why and how we are to use those gifts. **Jesus establishes that everything about the Christian life is built on the foundation of the confession, "Jesus is Lord".**

At verse 17, Paul turns his attention to practical instruction for how Christ-followers live under Jesus' Lordship in His Kingdom now. **Faith in Jesus produces a new you that leads to a new kind of living that forms more Jesus in you.**

This new life under Jesus' Lordship begins NOT with actions produced by human will, but faith-held convictions that form motivations for His glory. **What we hold to by faith, believe, is essential to how we live; in other words, doctrine matters!**

**OBJ** Paul begins with **Three Foundational Convictions that establish Jesus' Lordship in life.**



## 1. Christ-followers no longer live according to worldly thinking. .17-19

The Christian life begins with Spirit regeneration that empowers Word renewal of the mind. Christ-followers fill the mind with God's truth for total renewal that we might be able to discern God's Will. (Romans 12:2) [Christ-followers live differently because we no longer think as we did before we were regenerated by Holy Spirit and filled with God's truth.](#)

**Paul admonishes against living as a Gentile by no longer thinking with a futile mind.** *“Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. <sup>18</sup>They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. <sup>19</sup>They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.”*

Gentiles is a reference to life outside of and disconnected from God's covenant promise in salvation. The futility of the Gentile mind doesn't mean that it doesn't work, but that in its working it is empty of and does not regard God nor His Word, and incapable of producing God's purpose and will in you. A futile mind describes all worldly thinking. Paul gives three distinct qualities of this kind of mind. First, they are darkened in understanding, without the light of God's command, wisdom, or counsel. A darkened mind contains little of and gives no consideration to the light of God's truth because it is unwilling to. No light can get in because it is not allowed in. Second, he says that a futile mind is because they are alienated from God. Not only darkness dominate their thinking, but the whole way and counsel of God's Word is foreign to them, considered ill-suited for their purposes. This alienation is because of ignorance, which is either from a complete absence or intolerance that ignores by pretending not to know. Alienation by intolerance is the product of a hardness of heart toward God, a lack of receptiveness to him because of pride and self-trust. Third, Paul says that that darkness and alienation created a callousness toward God that gave them over to their sensuality, growing their greediness for more impurity. We often think of this type of sensuality as more extreme acts and practices or habits. But the fact is, the most mundane and harmless acts absent of God's light and for God's glory are at the center of what Paul addresses here as well. You are far more likely to neglect and dismiss God for common, acceptable practices that everyone else is doing but that deny God's power, purpose, and glory for your life because well, “everyone else is doing it”. And that is as Gentile in thinking as any dark perversion one could conceive. [Worldly thinking in any realm about any subject matter will never produce Christlikeness in you, but always alienates you from God.](#)

**ILLUS** You can know what the Bible says and still miss it by futility in your thinking. You may say, “I know the Bible says this is sin,” but you counter, “but God loves me. He wants the best for me.” These are both true, but truth never competes. Maybe you say, “It is not a sin to ‘X’”, and that may be true. But when “X” is prioritized before Christ it becomes sin because you applied worldly thinking that failed to honor Christ as first, or were simply intolerant of God's Word, in how you prioritized it. [Futile thinking is how Christians walk as Gentiles by failing to honor Christ, especially with good things in life.](#)

**The way you think determines the way you live.** The less of God's Word that inhabits your thinking, the more futile your thinking and godless your living. The more of the light of God's truth that informs and guides your thinking, the more Christ-honoring and glorifying will be your living. [Christ-follower, is your thinking distinctively Christ-honoring, is it informed by, aligned with, and prioritized according to the whole counsel of God's Word? Christ-followers live distinctively to honor Jesus as Lord because we consume our thinking with the light of God's truth! Until you think distinctively of Jesus you will never live distinctively for Jesus as Lord.](#)

**TRANS** “But...” Paul says. Here he introduces a hard stop for a change of direction.

## 2. The life of following Jesus Christ must be learned. .20-21

<sup>20</sup>*But that is not the way you learned Christ!—*

<sup>21</sup>*assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus,*

**Futile thinking is not the way you learned Christ.** You didn't learn to decorate with and quote Bible verses but refuse to put Christ first in life by not allowing them to determine the way you live. You learned to hear God's Word, believe in Jesus, and trust to live distinctively by what His Word says above and before what you practiced or thought. [Learning to follow Jesus is a process of placing Him first in your life by a new way of thinking that produces a new way of living that demonstrates the new that He has made in you.](#)



So many will say, "Living the Christian life is so hard." The real challenge of the Christian life is not a matter of difficult practices, but a hard heart toward God that believes what He says to be lesser in value, practice, or glory than what we learned in the world. Hebrews 5:8 provides one of the strongest encouragements in regard to how the Christian life must be learned when it states about Jesus, "*he learned obedience through what he suffered.*" And how did Jesus learn? Not through the typical pattern of "try – fail – try again". Rather, Jesus demonstrates the pattern of "abide – know – trust – listen – obey." Jesus obeyed the Father because he trusted Him. And He trusted because He knew Him. **Obeying God is always produced by trust that flows from a deep knowledge of God and His perfect love for you.**

The Greek word for *learned* – *Emathen* (root: *manthano*) – means to gain knowledge or skills. What Hebrews states as true for Jesus is the same word that Paul states is true of a Christ-follower. This word is the same root as our "disciple". Disciple is a new reality formed by two words, learn + follow, synergized together. When we remember that the "new" Jesus has made of us His righteousness in our heart, not in physical capacity nor capability, then we learn that our heart must be full to know Him if we are to trust in obedience. You could learn everything there is to know about the Bible and still not trust Jesus if your heart is starved from the bread of life and thirsts for living water. **You will always default to futile thinking when Jesus stays only in your intellect but remains little in your heart; learn first that you must know Him to trust Him.**

**APPL** **Where are you learning Christ in your life?** Two sure ways to recognize that you are not learning Christ. **First**, you always credit your victory over sinful habits to your ability or will power. Or, **second**, you loathe yourself every time you fail. Self-loathing is just another manifestation of self-centeredness. Brokenness that leads to repentance that produces righteousness does NOT include self-loathing. **Christ must consume more of your heart for the new you to become the new normal.**

**TRANS** Once you learn Christ and to trust Him, then you can put this into practice.

### **3. Christ-followers live out our confession "Jesus is Lord" by a practical rhythm of repentance. .22-24**

*<sup>22</sup>to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, <sup>23</sup>and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, <sup>24</sup>and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*

While all who are in Christ have been made new, the reality in this world is that there remains a war between two natures. But the process of learning Christ is one that deals with the sin nature. In these verses, Paul provides a working definition of the regular, daily practice of establishing Jesus as Lord in our heart and whole life, which is called repentance. The Christian life is one of recognizing our sin to put it off, anything that does not agree nor align with God's Word, and putting on the new self in the likeness of Jesus Christ. Because what we know to be true of us, that we are counted as and have been made righteous before God in Christ, is becoming the new reality for us, that as the Father speaks and reveals Himself in truth and glory, by faith we obey to bring glory to His name in this world, that others might see and come to know Him. **When you do this, you need not take credit for your victory nor loathe over your defeats, but you are set free to glory in Christ and the righteousness that He has made in you, to enjoy all the glory and blessing of life with God.**

**Does your daily regimen begin with the confession "Jesus is Lord" to practice repentance for righteousness?**

**CLOSE** Friend, if you are to live as a faithful Christ-follower, you must not only be deeply committed to these three foundational principles, but you must anchor your faith so deeply into them that they motivate everything you do.

**Jesus makes you a new creation to live by faith in His Kingdom under His Lordship for His glory now.**

**What new is being made of you this year?**

