



### Time to Reflect

- How can we become more distinctive as we seek to live out our faith each day? In what ways can we strive to see the renewing of our minds?
- Do we have a regular pattern for studying God's Word? In what ways is this spiritual discipline helping us to grow in holiness?

Last week we focused on Christian unity and what it means to walk together as Christians. We reflected on how we can be faithful to the One who calls us to faith and to service. This week our passage really narrows in on the theme of Christian living and it offers some very helpful instructions for us as we strive to be the people that God longs for us to be.

**“The Bible was written to be obeyed, and not simply studied, and this is why the words ‘therefore’ and ‘wherefore’ are repeated so often in the second half of Ephesians (4:1,17,25; 5:1,7,14,17,24).”**

(Warren Wiersbe, *Be Rich: Ephesians*, p119)

### Specifics

- Our passage begins by highlighting how Paul called the Ephesians to be distinctive (v17). They were to be different to the Gentiles. Their Christian journey was not to imitate or reflect the lives of those unbelievers who lived around them. This same instruction still applies today.
- As Paul developed his thinking on Christian distinctiveness, he revealed that Christians are to think differently. Note the references to the mind (v23), thinking (v17), understanding (v18), and ignorance (v18).
- As we read (v17-19), a clear comparison and contrast exists between the Christian mind and that of the unbeliever. Wiersbe suggests, **“The unsaved man’s thinking is futile because it is darkened...It is not just that their eyes are blinded so they cannot see, but that their minds are darkened so that they cannot think straight about spiritual matters.”**<sup>1</sup>
- As opposed to this, the Christian mind should be filled with the light of God’s Word and the Christian heart should be defined by the fullness of God’s love.
- This is Christian distinctiveness, an outworking of Romans 12:2 - **“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”**
- There is something radically different about the individual who has truly put God first and who strives to make Him known by word and deed. Such people grab the attention of others, challenge us to think, and speak into our very hearts and souls.
- This is what it means to be a Christian influencer, shining the wonderful hope of God’s Good News near and far. This is what Paul challenged the Ephesians to be.
- It’s important that we read the Bible every day – not just for the purpose of acquiring knowledge but rather with the intention of experiencing spiritual growth.

<sup>1</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *Be Rich: Ephesians* (David C Cook, 2009), p120.

- In (v20-24) we see how Paul encouraged the Ephesians to developing a living faith as opposed to a learnt spiritual language or practice. God calls us into fellowship with Him and we should seek to encounter Him through His Word.
  - Wiersbe contends, “The better I understand the Word of God, the better I know the Son of God, for the whole Bible is a revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 24:27; John 5:39).<sup>2</sup>”
  - As we seek to live as God’s people, we are called away from the ways of the world and towards the ways of God. This is a transformation and Paul was very aware of what this involves.
  - In (v22) he reminded the Ephesians that they needed “...to put off your old self...” and in (v23) he spoke of the necessity of being “...made new in the attitude of your minds.” Then in (v24) he returned to the importance of putting “...on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”
  - This is significant teaching on foundational aspects of Christian living. We are to take off the old and embrace the new. We don’t dwell on our past but live faithfully in the present, looking with confidence and optimism towards the future that God has planned for us.
  - Wiersbe brilliantly reflects, “...you no longer belong to the old corruption of sin; you belong to the new creation in Christ. Take off the graveclothes! How do we do this? ‘Be renewed in the spirit of your mind’ (Eph.4:23). Conversion is a crisis that leads to a process. Through Christ, once and for all, we have been given a new position in His new creation, but day by day, we must by faith appropriate what He has given us.<sup>3</sup>”
  - As we reflected earlier, reading the Word of God is hugely important as we strive to live for God. It speaks into our minds and hearts, offering guidance and instruction as we seek to grow in holiness.
  - As the Holy Spirit speaks to us through the pages of Scripture, our minds are gradually renewed and this leads to a changed life.
  - The remaining verses of our passage (v25-32) are packed full of application. Paul wanted to connect this teaching with everyday life. As he did so, he focused on five potential pitfalls.
- 1. Lying (v25)**
    - The importance of honest and honourable speech is referenced by Paul. Note the reason given by him as he encouraged the Ephesians to tell the truth – “...we are all members of one body.”
    - We are to be in the business of building each other up, not tearing each other down. It is worth noting that the sin of lying, and its effects, were experienced very quickly by the early church (Acts 5:1-11).
  - 2. Anger (v26-27)**
    - The fire of anger, if not quenched by loving forgiveness, can be incredibly destructive. Note Paul’s warning that it can actually give the devil a foothold (v27). It can also create a spiral of steady spiritual decline – as evidenced in the life of Cain (Genesis 4).
  - 3. Stealing (v28)**
    - There is a profound teaching on the importance of honesty of living contained in this verse. We are called to be honest and upright in our daily lives and dealings with other people.
  - 4. Corrupt Speech (v29)**
    - Wiersbe rightly indicates that “The mouth and heart are connected...We expect a change in speech when a person becomes a Christian.” This is purity of heart, evidenced in the language of blessing.
  - 5. Bitterness (v30-32)**
    - These final verses speak against several sins of the attitude. Bitterness is a hostility that poisons the heart and leads us into anger and spiritual regression. This is not what God expects from His people.

<sup>2</sup> Wiersbe, *Be Rich: Ephesians*, p121.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p122.