

# A Practical Study of EPHESIANS

## HEAVEN'S PLAN for Life on Earth

### “What It’s Like Living According to God’s Plan”

Key verse 5:17 — *“On this account, do not be foolish but be understanding what the will of the Lord is.”*

### **Study Number Eight – His Plan for Life on a New Level** **– Ephesians 4:17-5:2**

We come now to study #8—His Plan for Life on a New Level.

Paul’s getting down into the personal areas of life where we don’t care to have too many others look.

We use three verses to spell out His Plan for Life on a New Level—verses 22, 23 and 24.

It’s a horrible mistake that we have felt for thousands of years that we can legislate morality or that we can legislate conduct. Just by the fact that we say no to our children ought to be enough.

None of us who feel that we’re getting away with that easy restraint of saying no, have not had the wonderful joy of having teenagers pass through our house. The time comes when they declare their independence and let us know how

the cow eats the cabbage.

If they're going to grow up and become fitting citizens in a future society and enjoy a life of adulthood, there has to be something greater than our "Thou shalt not" to make them into what they ought to become.

We have done that in the body of Christ to the great detriment of believers.

The reason we have so many baby ineffective Christians who are just sitting on the premises, taking up space, singing the songs and giving their bucks and doing absolutely nothing with a quality of life that could touch other lives in a significant fashion is because we're trying to legislate spirituality.

It is only when we understand that we have a relationship with a holy God through the Person of Jesus Christ and that He alone is adequate for that spiritual life do we begin to make real progress in growing up in Jesus Christ.

Paul is going to hit very hard on that in dealing in some practical areas of our lives as Christ lives within. It's demonstrated as a normal by-product of that relationship when He is in control, we are living life on a new level.

Now having said that, let's pick up with verse 17.

Earlier we had His Plan for a Functioning Body and we dealt

briefly with the subject of SPIRITUAL GIFTS. Each of us has a contribution to make for the edification and for the equipping of the body of Christ for the work of the ministry.

Now with that responsibility with that gift also comes a different kind of life—LIFE ON A NEW LEVEL—verse 17.

**v. 17 This, therefore, I am saying and affirming in the Lord, that no longer are you to be walking as the Gentiles, walking with their minds fixed on futile things,**

“This, therefore, I am saying and affirming in the Lord, that no longer are you to be walking as the Gentiles, walking with their minds fixed on futile things,”

What has happened is the apostle has made a gentle digression from verse 4 down through verse 16 and he comes back to it.

If we read right now verses 1-3 of chapter 4, and then pick up at 17, it fits right together.

Let's be reminded of what he said in those first three verses:

Ephesians 4:1-3

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord am begging you to walk worthy of the calling to which you have been called. With all lowliness and meekness with patience, bearing

with one another in love. Making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

“This, therefore, I am saying and affirming to you in the Lord...”

So they fit together and we understand a little of the argument.

He’s saying that we “no longer [would] be walking as the Gentiles, walking with [our] minds fixed on futile things.”

What’s that?

Well Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes says:

“The things of this world are meaningless, meaningless, utterly meaningless.” (ref. Ecclesiastes 1:2)

The word “futile” means EMPTY. It’s TEMPORARY. It’s putting our mind on the things here and now.

How much of the time of day do we spend thinking on heavenly things? And how much of the time of day is consumed with all of the menial things? The futile things? The empty things that are going to change and that are going to pass away?

The percentage would be incredible if we ask ourselves how much do we think about where we’re going and how much do

we think about where we are and what we're doing. He says don't be living like that where we're thinking like the Gentiles on "futile things."

**v. 18 being those who have their understanding darkened, who have been estranged from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, through the dullness of their hearts;**

"being those who have their understanding darkened, who have been estranged from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, through the dullness of their hearts;"

Before a person comes to know Christ he was without God. He was without hope. He was living in a world estranged from God—estranged from the promises, the covenants.

Now here he describes them further. He says they're "understanding [is] darkened."

A person who does not know Jesus Christ, when we begin to deal with them we immediately understand we're on a totally different wavelength. If we've ever been in close conversation with somebody that we're trying to win to Christ, we find we have to really work.

When we face those kinds of things we realize 2 Corinthians 4:4 is true:

## 2 Corinthians 4:4

in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them.

The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God. There's a wall there. There's a restraint. They don't want us getting in close.

The second thing we read here:

“who have been estranged from the life of God,”

They don't know anything about ETERNAL LIFE. They're without God and without His life.

And then notice it's:

“through the ignorance that is in them, through the dullness of their hearts;”

That little phrase “dullness” and the next verse is going to have the word “calloused” in it. That is also the description of a lot of Christians.

Before we become a Christian, our mind is dulled. Our conscience is calloused. There are a lot of Christians who are just like that.

Hebrews 5:11 says when we don't implement what we know, we become hard of hearing. That's the same word. We become dull of hearing.

Maybe some of us are in that boat because we come from very conservative backgrounds, we come from good churches and we've sat under a lot of teaching but we aren't putting much of it in practice in our life. What that does to us is it makes us dull. It makes us not get very excited about coming to Bible study.

That's the first way we discover it. Secondly, we get callous. Nothing's going to get through. It'd be the toughest thing in the world to get us to cry a tear over something that God was really speaking to us about because we have that callous there. And that callous has built up and built up so that no one can get through it.

That's the unsaved person but it's also a person described who knows Christ.

The Lord Jesus describes it in a wonderful way in Mark chapter 3. He comes into the synagogue and there's a guy with a withered hand. The Lord turns to those guys and He says "is it right to do good on the Sabbath? Is it right to heal this man?" And they kept silent. They just looked at Him. And it says the Lord turned around and looked on them and He was grieved for their callousness of heart. (ref. Mark 3:3-5)

A heart that has been rubbed and rubbed and rubbed. See it

in verse 19?

**v. 19 who being calloused, they gave themselves over to debauchery, for the practice of all kinds of sinful things and greediness.**

“who being calloused, they gave themselves over to debauchery, for the practice of all kinds of sinful things and greediness.”

It’s a conscience seared with a hot iron, burnt beyond feeling.

It’s a Christian who takes a blasé attitude toward the statement “it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (ref. Heb. 10:31)

It’s a believer feeling they can get away with whatever they want to because after all, they just got to dial 1 John 1:9: “If we confess our sins He’s faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

So why not kick up our heels and sow a few wild oats and live it?

That’s callousness, insensitivity.

One writer really put it down where it needs to be and that is, when a Christian loves sin it’s like taking the rattlesnake to bed with us that killed our child. We’re still nursing it and loving it like a pet because we have had the desire to come and

take Jesus Christ who shed His blood on Calvary for our sin and nurture the sin itself for which He died.

It's a horrible, horrible thought but people who are living without Christ and without God in the world live like that. They have to find an excuse for their guilt. They have to avoid personal confrontation by filling their lives with all kinds of meaningless activity, personal possessions and all the rest.

It's a person who has lost the power of sensitivity or sensation or feeling. Its sin has brought such a petrifying affect that nothing can get through. And we just hold on by the seat of our pants to hope that something will happen to bring them to a relationship with Christ.

“who being calloused, they gave themselves over to debauchery, for the practice of all kinds of sinful things and greediness.”

It's “all kinds”? One won't satisfy. We have to do another and then we do another and then it gets bigger and bigger. And the waves begin to engulf. But without sensation, this unquenchable desire for more continues and continues.

Barclay takes this verse and he describes what it's like to be a sinner. He says:

1. Paul saw men's hearts so petrified that they were not even aware that they were sinning.
2. He saw men so dominated by sin that shame was lost and

decency forgotten.

3. He saw men so much at the mercy of their desires that they did not care whose life they injured and whose innocence they destroyed so long as the desires were satisfied.  
(source unknown)

That's greediness! Going for it! We don't care who we hurt! Or what we cause! And who's been injured! And whose innocence has been destroyed, but in sin we continue to do it.

**v. 20 But you did not so learn Christ,**

“But you did not so learn Christ,”

This is not the way a believer conducts himself.

As a believer, life is different. Life is to be lived on a new level.

**v. 21 since indeed you heard about Him and were taught Him, just as the truth is in Jesus,**

“since indeed you heard about Him and were taught in Him, just as the truth is in Jesus,”

There's no better verse to focus on what we looked at in the Master Plan and that is, the centrality of all God's dealings with us is in the Person of Christ. There it is in that verse.

All Paul did was spend time. They heard about Christ, they were taught about Christ, and then he ends it by just saying:

“just as the truth is in Jesus.”

It all centers in the Person of Christ.

And when we get away from the Person of Jesus Christ in dealing with our relationship with God, we immediately begin to go on a guilt trip. We begin to get anxious. We begin to get worried. We begin to wonder “am I a misfit?” Or “why didn’t I have this?” or “why didn’t that happen to me?”

Immediately we’re launched into a sea of insecurity.

Or we keep our focus on the Person of Christ, we magnify the Lord Jesus. He’s the center of all of God’s dealing with us.

His Son, Paul says “I taught you. You heard about Him. You were taught in Him, the truth is in Jesus Christ.”

Now there are **THREE POINTS** to life on a new level—there’s one in verse 22, one in verse 23, and one in verse 24.

**v. 22 that you laid aside concerning your former way of life, the old man, who is being corrupted according to the deceptive desires.**

“that you laid aside concerning your former way of life, the old man, who is being corrupted according to the deceptive desires.”

What happens when Jesus Christ comes in?

A new nature is placed within the child of God. At the moment of salvation, the old nature also is nipped—as far its power is concerned. But that old nature, by an act of our will, can be allowed to operate and do the very things that we’ve seen described in these verses.

That’s life on the old level but we can be living life on the old level just that fast. Drive down the freeway and have somebody cut in front of us and the old nature will jump out and quit singing “Let’s just praise the Lord” and we tell that guy where to go.

It’s an incredible thing how the old nature can jump out and surprise us. Because the moment we say “Sic’em man!” he’s out there and he’s ready to operate. And the old nature’s constantly rejecting this new nature.

So this new nature wants to possess. What are we to do?

First of all in this, we have to lay aside. We have to reckon ourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God—Romans 6.

We have to lay this “aside concerning your former way of life, the old man” or the old nature. That’s another way. They call it the old man, the new man, the old nature, the new nature—whatever.

That old nature “is being corrupted according to the deceptive desires” that we just read about in these verses before.

That’s why it shouldn’t shock us that a Christian, under the control of the old nature, will look just like somebody who isn’t a Christian when they’re living out of fellowship with the Lord under the control of that nature. They’ll be just the same. It’ll happen.

And then we’ll begin to immediately think, “But I’m not a Christian.” Yes we are. That’s not the question. The issue is we’re out of fellowship with the Lord and we’ve let the old nature get ahold of us again.

1. “[Lay] aside concerning your former way of life, the old man.”

Like taking off the old worn-out clothes, the old man—the sin-loving nature—put on this new man.

Now here comes the second one—verse 23.

**v. 23 But get yourselves renewed in the spirit of your minds.**

2. “But get yourselves renewed in the spirit of your minds.”

Here’s the second point.

The first affects our WILL. By an act of our will, lay aside that

old manner of life. Recognize that it is the old nature. Put it aside.

Paul says in:

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ is living in me. And the life I'm now living in the flesh I'm living by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

“Lay it aside”—that’s NEGATIVE.

POSITIVELY—deal with our mind.

1. our WILL now
2. our THOUGHTS in life on a new level.

“get yourselves renewed in the spirit of your minds.”

When Paul is talking about a Christian life, he sure spends a lot of time on what we think about.

In that magnificent passage in Philippians chapter 2 he says “let this mind be in you which was also in Christ.” (ref. Phil. 2:5)

It’s almost like a brain transplant isn’t it?

He sees the changing of our thoughts.

Isaiah the prophet said it: “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways saith the Lord. Heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts and your thoughts.” (ref. Isaiah 55:8-9)

We aren't thinking right.

The Lord Jesus also said it's out of the heart comes the issues of life.

“For as a man thinks in his heart, so is he.” (ref. Prov. 23:7)

If we took our mental menu and threw it here on the screen it would also explain the problems we're having in our life.

We had to think about it before we got involved in it. Whether it's bitterness and resentment toward our mate, problems with our children, problems with our employer or employee. Whatever it is, we thought wrong and the problems would be demonstrated on the screen if we took our thoughts for the last 24 hours.

Now the next thing is, are we willing to let our thoughts be on the screen? They're going to be.

At the Judgement Seat of Christ we're going to be held

accountable for the way we think. Not even for the things that we do, because it's a foregone conclusion. We're thinking about it, we're eventually going to do it. It's going to catch up with us.

Paul hits the nerve when he says as a believer, and he gives us a command: “be getting yourselves renewed in the spirit of your minds.”

How do we renew our old mind?

Romans chapter 12 talks about that doesn't it? It says:

### Romans 12:1-2

...present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy unto God, [which is our reasonable service] and be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.

How do we get to thinking right? Well we read about how God thinks. And the more we put the computer of God's thoughts into the mind, the more it comes out. It's just like a computer: Garbage in—garbage out.

We put the Word of God in. That's why we memorize the Word of God.

The psalmist said:

### Psalm 119:9, 11

Where shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy word. Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against Thee.

We have to have a new reprogramming of the mind.

We have to go get off the shelf the program for the computer. Shove it in and it's going to bring the results. It's a new mindset.

Now the Scripture commands that in a lot of places so this is not something that we cannot do in the power of the Spirit.

If we're not acting right, we can go back and realize we weren't thinking right. If we'll be honest about it, the problems we have that is plaguing us right now are the reasons we aren't thinking right. Because if we were thinking right like a Christian ought to think, we'd be acting right. It's just back and forth, as easy as it can be.

Now Paul says to the Philippians:

Philippians 2:5

Let this mind be in you which is also in Christ.

But listen to Peter:

1 Peter 1:13

...gird up the loins of your mind...

What's that telling us? That's a picture of a guy with long flowing robes and he's getting ready to jog or he's getting ready to go to battle. He tucks his robes and he heads for it. He gets into action!

We can determine what we think about!

As a result of that, we avoid those things that are not right to think. We reject that.

When a thought comes in, like somebody makes a snide remark or criticizes something or has made a long list of their grievances, our initial reaction is to punch their lights out. But then there is a verse of scripture that immediately comes.

That verse scripture can come from any number of places in our mind and causes an instantaneous change of reference. And therefore causes us to respond to the situation rather than react to it. And we can do that.

It's an amazing thing! If we'll just feed the computer with the Word of God. It's not enough to have it on the page to go dig for it when we have a problem. We have to have it there. Flip it into the computer and get it going. It's the only way to do it.

This is the way to RENEW YOUR MIND.

## 2 Corinthians 10:5

...bringing every thought captive unto the obedience of Christ.

When we have those feelings of weariness and retaliation and lack of appreciation and self-pity, what do we do? Well we just suck it up and let the Word speak.

## Galatians 6:9

Let us not grow weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.

## Psalms 126:5-6

They that sow in tears will reap in joy.  
He that goeth forth and weepeth,  
bearing precious seed,  
shall doubtless come again with rejoicing,  
bringing his sheaves with him.

So get in there and keep going! Quit acting like a big baby!

We bring our thoughts captive to the situation where we find ourselves and we get on with it, recognizing that God is so gracious.

We'll never forget a verse when it happens to minister to us in the trenches.

There are a lot of times when we think that the Lord's not working as fast as we want Him to work.

### Hebrews 10:36

For you have need of patience, that after you've done the will of God, you might receive the promise.

That always just jumps out and just says, "Settle down and wait. Everything's on hold right now. And as long as it's on hold, I know you're really trusting Me and dependent upon Me so I like you being there. Just stay there. Eventually we'll get around to it IN MY TIME."

The Word of God is practical as a manual to renew the mind so it's not impossible for this to begin to take place.

The renewing of our mind is part and parcel of the work of the Holy Spirit to make us Christlike and give us the capacity for life on a new level.

There's a great verse in Philippians 4:8 that is the right MENTAL MENU for the believer:

### Philippians 4:8

Now brothers as I close this letter, let me say this one more thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true and good and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and dwell in the fine good things in others. Think about all you can praise God

for and be glad about it.

So “renewed in the spirit of your mind”—this is the way we begin to think. Play our thoughts against that on a regular basis. Put Philippians 4:8 on our mirror in the morning and then look at it in the evening and see how well we did as we’re experiencing the renewing of our mind in this business of life on the new level.

Verse 24—here comes the third point.

**v. 24 And put on the new man, who after God was created in true righteousness and holiness.**

3. “And put on the new man, who after God was created in true righteousness and holiness.”

Now don’t just take off the old clothes and stand around stark naked. “Put on the new man.” Let the Holy Spirit energize the new nature. Let Him work!

The moments of growth in our life as a believer only occur during the times when the new nature is under the power of the Spirit functioning in our life. Now mark that down.

The times when we’re living in the flesh under the control of the old nature, we are in a paralytic condition. That’s why Paul said to the Corinthians “you are babies in need of milk.”

Even though we’ve been Christians for 20, 30, 40 years, we

have to have our dirty britches changed and given a bottle because we haven't grown up in the Lord Jesus.

The only times we'll grow in our life and make progress is when, under the control of the new nature, the Spirit of God is producing Christlikeness in our life.

So Paul says put off that old garment! Experience the renewing of the mind and put on the new man who is "created in true righteousness and holiness"!

The Galatian Christians were caught up in this legalistic business of trying to be spiritual by the Law. And there's a beautiful verse. It's a picture of a woman getting ready to have a baby. This is the way Paul describes it. He says this:

### Galatians 4:19

my little children [living in bondage and legalism] for whom I am again suffering birth pains until Christ is completely and permanently formed within you.

He says, "I just get so upset and so concerned that you've forced all these do's and don'ts and all this framework of legalism as a poor substitute for spirituality. All that produces is a bunch of hypocrites who will say one thing and live another!"

That's a poor substitute for what the Lord meant for life in a dynamic, living relationship with Christ on a new level ought

to be.

This is the way it ought to be as he describes His plan for this kind of life.

Three points:

1. “lay it aside”—our former way of life,
2. get yourselves “renewed in the spirit of your minds,” and
3. “put on that new man, who after God was created in true righteousness and holiness.”

Now the rest of study is going to show us some ramifications of putting on that “new man” and what the life on the new level is going to start looking like when it’s down where the rubber meets the road.

Verse 25—whenever we have a “therefore” we find out what it’s THERE FOR.

**v. 25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let everyone be speaking the truth with his neighbor, because we are members one of another.**

“Therefore, having put away falsehood,”—well that’s one of the things that’s going to go with the old man. We’re going to quit lying—“let everyone be speaking the truth with his neighbor, because we are members one of another.”

Because of this dynamic relationship that we have with each other, we're to be honest, open, transparent, above board.

“put away the falsehood”

Somebody wrote it this way:

What became of a lie  
When somebody told it,  
The room wouldn't hold it,  
For busy tongues rolled it,  
And got it outside.

When all came across it  
They never once lost it,  
But tossed it, until it  
Had grown long and wide.

This lie brought forth others,  
Dark sisters and brothers,  
And fathers and mothers,  
A terrible crew.

And on as they hurried,  
The people they flurried,  
And bothered and worried,  
As lies always do.

At last evil boded,

It fretted and goaded,  
Then at last exploded,  
In sin and in shame;

While through smoke and fire  
The pieces flew higher,  
And hit the sad liar,  
Killing his good name.  
(source unknown)

That's a pretty good description of what happens when we start on a path of "falsehood" and lying.

First he talks about lying, next he talks about getting mad.

**v. 26 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down upon your angry mood.**

"Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down upon your angry mood."

Is it right to be angry?

Is there a place for **RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION**?

Obviously there is.

"Be angry and do not sin;"

How can we be angry and not sin?

And how can we be angry and sin?

It's the FOCUS OF OUR ANGER.

If we are angry because our rights have been violated, we're out in left field. Because we don't have any. We're a servant of Jesus Christ.

If we're angry because somebody else's rights are being violated, then we're in the ballpark.

For instance, when Jesus walks into the Temple of His Father and finds them changing money He as a grabs a whip and proceeds to drive the whole lot out of there. That changed our whole image of the Person of Christ.

Those fellows did not know what hit them on that occasion.

“Be angry and do not sin;”

“do not let the sun go down upon your angry mood.”

Why?

Hebrews 12:15

lest a root of bitterness spring up defiling man.

Anger held in and slept upon really becomes a bitter spirit.

One couple came to the marriage counselor and said “We are in trouble. We made a commitment to each other that we would never go to bed at night angry and we haven’t had any sleep for three weeks.”

Yes, we all can relate to that.

Maybe we can also relate to the fact that we got angry and we didn’t deal with it and there is now conflict. There’s a sense of insecurity. There’s a sense of not caring because we’ve let that thing fester.

Because it has festered to this point, it has affected every other area of our life. It’s because as a believer we violated a principle that Paul talks about here. It is number one, don’t lie to each other. And number two, don’t get angry to the degree that we’re going to sleep on it. Because as soon as we sleep on our angry friend, we are in trouble.

It’s always gets bigger! We know that! We’ve had that experience!

Getting up in the morning and after we’ve slept on it, we want to go kick the daylights out of that character. It’s 10 times worse! We’ve justified our position, we know we’re right, and the other person is wrong. And they had no right to do that. As a result of that sleep, it’s a strange osmosis of the devil himself.

A man who has to continue to be angry is playing in the hands of the devil. And anger in that sense is sin. It has to be dealt with. So many men say, “I can’t help it! That’s just the way I am! I was born with a short fuse! Everybody else is just going to have to put up with me because ...”

We’re going to have a tough time with that kind of statement at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

The Lord’s going to call it what it is. It’s sin.

Notice the very next verse. He says:

**v. 27 And do not give the devil a chance.**

“And do not give the devil a chance.”

Boy does it ever!

**1 Peter 5:8, 9**

Be careful, watch out for the attacks from Satan, your great enemy. He prowls around like a hungry, roaring lion, looking for some victim to tear apart. Stand firm when he attacks, and trust the Lord, remember that other Christians are going through these sufferings too.

**v. 28 The one who is stealing, let him no longer be stealing; but rather let him work hard, working with his own hands that which is good, in order**

**that he may be having to share with the one who is having need.**

“The one who is stealing, let him no longer be stealing; but rather let him work hard, working with his own hands that which is good, in order that he may be having to share with the one who is having need.”

What’s the third area of the practical out-workings of life on a new level?

Number one, he’s dealt with the whole problem. Earlier in verse 25 about LYING and the verse 26 about ANGER, and now in the verse 27 about STEALING.

We think of stealing as taking something that belongs to somebody else and we think of property. But there are a lot of areas where we steal by rationalization.

We steal MINUTES from our employers.

We steal PRIVILEGE which we justify as being ours when really, if the Spirit were working in a situation, we’d have to say no.

We steal FUNDS which He gives which rightfully belong to the Lord if we we’re walking in fellowship with Him. And we rationalize it as “one of these days when my ship comes in, then I’m going to get back even with God.”

So there are lots of areas where we STEAL AS BELIEVERS. We only have to allow the Spirit of God to begin to work on us like we just got through singing “Search me oh God and know my heart.”

He says “work hard.” Work for that which is good so we can have something to share with somebody else who has a need.

Verse 29—here comes the fourth one.

**v. 29 Let every rotten word not be coming out of your mouth, but whatever is good, such as will build up where it is necessary, in order that it might impart grace to those who are hearing.**

“Let every rotten word not be coming out of your mouth, but whatever is good, such as will build up where it is necessary, in order that it might impart grace to those who are hearing.”

Now Paul’s dealt with the tongue like James did.

Why?

Our words reflect what’s in our heart!

We had to think it. It had to get into our heart and it comes out in our conversation.

At that one moment of confrontation, we are sometimes surprised by the words that we said. But if we’ll think about

it, we'll remember that we thought about it a whole lot before we said it. It's just that the opportunity for escape came when we said that.

And we know in our marital conflicts, sometimes we've said some pretty horrendous ugly things under stress. And we said that and we couldn't believe we said it.

BUT—frame of reference—we thought it and it's been back there and we've been thinking about it. We filed it in the computer when the stress came and the button was pushed, the program responded with words that weren't very pleasant.

There's also another part of this and that is, when we're under stress, the rotten words come out.

Just be around some guys with foul mouths. That's the only vocabulary they know. And the stuff really does not edify. It doesn't build it. It pollutes the air.

We spend so much time running around telling everybody that the surgeon general has determined that smoking is detrimental to our health and we're so upset when they pollute the air around us with the crazy smoke! Some believers should get the same burden and concern with this rotten stuff that we're talking about and that comes out of the mouth.

We sit next to them on the airlines, we sit next to them in the restaurants. They don't mind it! And they have some of the

lousiest things they say! Rotten, defiled, dirty, filthy language coming out of sophisticated double-breasted-suited men who are very, very successful but their language! Yuck! And they say it and the drivel comes out.

James chapter 3 is right. No one can tame the tongue. Only the Spirit of God can do that.

It's a little member but it can cause enormous damage.

Here's a poem along that line:

Are you on your guard?  
You have a little prisoner,  
he's nimble, sharp and clever.  
He's sure to get away from you,  
unless you watch him ever.  
And when he once gets out,  
he makes more trouble in an hour  
Than you can stop in many a day,  
at work with all your power.  
He gets your playmates by the ears,  
He says what isn't so,  
And uses many ugly words,  
No good for you to know.  
Quick, fasten tight the ivory gates,  
And chain him while he's young!  
For this same dangerous prisoner,  
Is just your little tongue!  
(source unknown)

Rotten words coming out of the mouth.

There's going to be a change in the speech!

It's going to be a problem.

A lot of guys in the business world have struggled with this whole thing of learning to re-verbalize to reprogram their speaking. It's a very personal area but it's something they feel concerned about as the Spirit of God uses passages like this to deal with them in this regard, to have a whole new mind-set and vocabulary.

**v. 30 And stop grieving the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.**

“And stop grieving the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

Why is that command there?

Because the other four things are true.

When we are lying, when we are angry, when we are stealing and when we are not concerned about our conversation and the words that we say, we grieve the Holy Spirit.

He is the HOLY Spirit.

He can be GRIEVED and He can be QUENCHED.

And when He is grieved, we are out of fellowship with the Lord. We are not in a position of growth.

Lying, anger, stealing and the tongue will do that.

**v. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath, and anger, and shouting, and slander, be put away from you, with all ill will.**

“Let all bitterness and wrath, and anger, and shouting, and slander, be put away from you, with all ill will.”

If we want to destroy human relationships, there are SIX WAYS to do it:

1. “bitterness,”
2. “wrath,”
3. “anger,”
4. “shouting,”
5. “slander,” and
6. “ill will.”

But if we want to develop personal relationships, there are

FIVE of them in verse 32.

**v. 32 And be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving each other, even as also God in Christ forgave you.**

“And be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving each other, even as also God in Christ forgave you.”

The fourth one is:

**5:v. 1 Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children.**

“Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children.”

**v. 2 And walk in love, even as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, as an offering and a sacrifice to God for an aroma of a sweet smell.**

“And walk in love, even as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, as an offering and a sacrifice to God for an aroma of a sweet smell.”

What’s his life and his plan for life on a new level?

Lay aside, reprogram our thoughts and put on this new man.

Spiritual growth is slow. It’s a painful process. It doesn’t just happen by sitting here and all of a sudden getting goose

bumps running up and down our back and immediately becoming a gigantic spirit-filled Christian ready to set the world on fire.

It's a very slow and painful process.

It's described by Joseph Bayly. Joseph Bayly had a lot of tragedy in his life. He's lost three of his children to a blood disease. He wrote a book called *Out of My Mind* and this is what he says:

(Out of My Mind by Joseph Bayly)

Did you ever fish with two boys, one ten, the other three? You'll find it's lots of fun if it's anything like our fishing trip up French Creek. Even though we fished for several hours and didn't catch anything. But there were motor boats and bees to watch and lines to unsnarl, sandwiches to munch on and wild flowers to look at and smell. Then all of a sudden, Joe had a bite. He got excited and when he reeled in, we found that sure enough, it was a bass, only disappointingly too small to keep.

But to [my son] Danny's three year [old] eyes, the little bass was infinitely larger than the tiny minnows that Joe and Danny had been using for bait. So he came running, his trot-line getting all tangled up in the underbrush that edged the creek. The excited words that came tumbling out revealed that I had not sufficiently explained the nature of fishing to my little boy. Daddy, he begged, turn my little fish into a big one like Joe's. So I explained fishing to him and later I thought of my life, for there's a lot of time to think when you're fishing

and they're not biting.

I thought of the kind of Christian I want to be, a strong one, a mature one. I thought how I'd like to go to a meeting, make a decision, and raise my hand and suddenly be a spiritual giant. But that hasn't been God's method. He hasn't suddenly turned me from a little fish into a big one. Instead as in all His growth processes, change is gradual. Growth takes time.

He does make changes, but few are accomplished overnight. And, as in fishing, when they're not biting, so in Christian growth, patience is one important element. How does patience grow, tribulation works patience.

It's been months now since I wrote those above words, and I was wrong, at least partly so. I wasn't wrong about the way I grow, painfully, slowly, rather than overnight, nor was I wrong about the importance of patience and of how it grows but I was wrong about little Danny, now almost five, for last Tuesday morning he was only a little fish, but at twenty minutes after two, that afternoon, Danny suddenly became a big fish. His growing love for the Lord Jesus instantly complete, all sin gone forever. His little red pajamas were exchanged for the pure white robe of Jesus' righteousness. (source unknown)

Here are the lessons that come out of our study

Lesson #1: What do you spend your time thinking about?  
Futile or future things?

Lesson #2: “Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.” Are you following the mental menu of Philippians 4:8?

Lesson #3: “We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,” Are you bringing your thoughts captive as in 2 Corinthians 10:5?

Lesson #4: “And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life” 1 John 5:11-12. Do you have the life of God in you?

Lesson #5: The callous of coldness can form so quickly on our hearts.

Lesson #6: Would you say that presently you are living in victory or defeat?

Lesson #7: List the things you *have* or *are* laying aside.

Lesson #8: Are you experiencing renewal from your daily time in the Word?

Lesson #9: Read Galatians 5:22-23 (NASB). And what fruitage of the Spirit do you see in your life?

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

Lesson #10: As far as you know, are you walking in truth?

Lesson #11: Have you let the sun go down on your anger?

Lesson #12: Have you given the devil a place?

Lesson #13: Are you presently grieving the Holy Spirit?

Lesson #14: Are you presently walking in love?

Loving Father, we come back to those words of David: Search me, Oh God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts. See if there be any wicked way in me. Grant to us the courage, the grace, to admit where we're wrong, to demonstrate compassion and love; to take the offensive, to deal with the offense, the problem. Father, may we be those who will let these commands haunt us until we do something about them. Laying aside the old man, being renewed in the spirit of our minds, putting on the new man created in righteousness and holiness, helping and hastening Your good work and conforming us to the image of Jesus Christ. For it's in the Savior's name we pray. Amen.

# A Practical Study of EPHESIANS

## HEAVEN'S PLAN for Life on Earth

### “What It’s Like Living According to God’s Plan”

Key verse 5:17 — *“On this account, do not be foolish but be understanding what the will of the Lord is.”*

### **STUDY NUMBER EIGHT – HIS PLAN FOR LIFE ON A NEW LEVEL – EPHESIANS 4:17-5:2**

#### **KEY VERSES 4:22-24**

v. 17 This, therefore, I am saying and affirming in the Lord, that no longer are you to be walking as the Gentiles, walking with their minds fixed on futile things,

v. 18 being those who have their understanding darkened, who have been estranged from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, through the dullness of their hearts;

v. 19 who being calloused, they gave themselves over to debauchery, for the practice of all kinds of sinful things and greediness.

v. 20 But you did not so learn Christ,

v. 21 since indeed you heard about Him and were taught Him, just as the truth is in Jesus,

v. 22 that you laid aside concerning your former way of life, the old man, who is being corrupted according to the deceptive desires.

v. 23 But get yourselves renewed in the spirit of your minds.

v. 24 And put on the new man, who after God was created in true righteousness and holiness.

v. 25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let everyone be speaking the truth with his neighbor, because we are members one of another.

v. 26 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down upon your angry mood.

v. 27 And do not give the devil a chance.

#### **NOTES**

## NOTES

v. 28 The one who is stealing, let him no longer be stealing; but rather let him work hard, working with his own hands that which is good, in order that he may be having to share with the one who is having need.

v. 29 Let every rotten word not be coming out of your mouth, but whatever is good, such as will build up where it is necessary, in order that it might impart grace to those who are hearing.

v. 30 And stop grieving the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

v. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath, and anger, and shouting, and slander, be put away from you, with all ill will.

v. 32 And be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving each other, even as also God in Christ forgave you.

5:v.1 Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children.

v. 2 And walk in love, even as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, as an offering and a sacrifice to God for an aroma of a sweet smell.

## QUESTIONS:

1. Read Ephesians 4:17-5:2 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

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2. Describe the pre-Christian conduct of these Ephesians according to verses 17, 18, 19.

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3. Where does the truth reside according to verse 21?

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4. What are we supposed to put off and to put on according to verses 22, 23 and 24?

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5. What are we to do according to verse 25 & why?

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6. Why do you handle anger immediately according to verses 26 and 27?

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7. Outline the program for the use of the tongue according to verses 29, 30 and 31?

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8. How are we to display Christ according to verses 4:32, 5:1, 2?

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9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

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10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

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**LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:**

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: What do you spend your time thinking about?  
Futile or future things?

LESSON #2: “Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let you mind dwell on these things.” Are you following the mental menu of Philippians 4:8?

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