

### 3. Put on a New Nature

*Ephesians 4:24, 30-32 NLT - 24 Put on your new nature, created to be like God--truly righteous and holy. ... 30 And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. 32 Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.*

*As chapter 4 concludes we find the contrast between old and new natures in verses 31 and 32. Why do you think Paul emphasizes these particular behaviors?*

It is still very easy to be caught up in the sins of the old nature listed here. If we want to live our lives pleasing to God, it begins by humbly accepting God's forgiveness. It is from a posture of humility that we can put away anger, harsh words, and bitterness and replace them with kindness and forgiveness which we ourselves have received.

*Take a moment to pray a prayer of repentance asking God's forgiveness so that you will be prepared to forgive others.*

#### WRAP-UP

By God's grace we have been given a new identity. We are called to be part of Christ's Body, the Church. The gifts he has uniquely given you should be used to benefit the whole Body of Christ. Our old nature was focused on ourselves, but our new nature is shaped to be an integral part of the Body, and when we are doing our part, the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

#### MEMORY VERSE.

*Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you. - Ephesians 4:32 NLT*

**PRAYER (20 MIN)** Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life

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*Challenge.- Be on your guard this week against situations that would incite you to engage in bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander. Be prepared to humbly extend kindness, mercy and forgiveness.*

## “Your New Identity”

### Prison Letters- #4

#### INTRODUCTION

As Paul continues his letter to the Ephesians, he focuses on their new identity as followers of Christ. Many in this church were previously Gentiles, separated from God and rejected by the Jews. But Paul gives them the good news, that in the Body of Christ there is no distinction. They are called to build up and one another through the unique gifts God has given them. Paul wants them to abandon the old labels they wore and view themselves as new creations, called by God. And when they view themselves in that way, their lives will naturally reflect their new identity in Christ.

#### Ice Breaker

When introducing yourself, besides your name, what do you say?

#### Key Passage

*Ephesians 4:24 NLT - 24 Put on your new nature, created to be like God--truly righteous and holy.*

#### STUDY QUESTIONS

##### 1. Your Purpose

*Ephesians 4:1, 16 NLT - 1 Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. ... 16 He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.*

Did you ever ponder “What is my purpose in life?” Paul addresses that question in this passage. He tells the Ephesians, and all of us who

follow Jesus, that we have a calling. Each of us are a part of Christ's body, the Church. Of course, each of us is a unique part of the body.

*How does Paul describe the results when the members of the body do their own special work (Eph 4:16)? Can you think of an example?*

Paul says each one of us is given a special gift. Read through the gifts listed in Ephesians 4:11, 1 Cor 12:28 and Romans 12:5-8. These are not exhaustive lists, but let's look for some similarities in these verses.

*Ephesians 4:11-12 NLT - 11 Now these are the gifts Christ **gave to the church**: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers, 12 Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ.*

*1 Corinthians 12:28 NLT - 28 Here are some of the parts God has **appointed for the church**: first are apostles, second are prophets, third are teachers, then those who do miracles, those who have the gift of healing, those who can help others, those who have the gift of leadership, those who speak in unknown languages.*

*Romans 12:5-8 NLT - 5 so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and **we all belong to each other**. 6 In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. 7 If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. 8 If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.*

*What is God's purpose in giving these gifts, who benefits? Do you recognize any of these as something God has called you to do? What gift has God uniquely given you that can be used to equip, build up, grow and love the body of believers? If you aren't sure, ask the members of your group what gifts they see in you.*

## **2. Love and Unity**

We are called and gifted by God to be part of The Church, which is the Body of Christ. We hear the term Church used today to refer to a building or an organization. But the Church is actually made up of all

the believers. We are all part of "The Church" world-wide. But we are also part of the local church which meets regularly for worship, service and fellowship. New Life is not the building or the staff, it is every single person young and old who gathers on our campus.

*Ephesians 4:2-6 NLT - 2 Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. 3 Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. 4 For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. 5 There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 and one God and Father, who is over all and in all and living through all.*

God sees us individually, but He also sees us as collectively as part of a totally integrated Body. All believers have received the love of God and share a common Spirit, hope, Lord, faith, baptism, and Heavenly Father.

*How does Paul encourage the Ephesians to act towards one another in verse 4? This is not a direction for behavior modification. It should flow from the new identity which began with God's love poured into you. The way we are called to treat others is a reflection of the way God has treated us. Re-read verse 4 to see if this is the way God has treated you.*

*Ephesians 4:17-19, 22-23 NLT -. ... 17 With the Lord's authority I say this: Live no longer as the Gentiles do, for they are hopelessly confused. 18 Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him. 19 They have no sense of shame. They live for lustful pleasure and eagerly practice every kind of impurity....22 throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. 23 Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes.*

*Paul points out what we should not be doing any longer. These things are linked to our old identity. For the Ephesians their old identity was called "Gentile". Share a little with your group about the process you went through as you recognized yourself to be a new creation in Jesus. How were your attitudes or actions changed as you grew in faith? Who or what did the Holy Spirit use to renew your thoughts and attitudes?*