

EPHESIANS

GROUP GUIDE: WEEK 4

CONVERSATION STARTER

If you could have one talent or skill without any training or practice, what would it be and why?

A NEW WAY OF LIFE

“Walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:1-3).

Often, we get caught up thinking of Christianity as a one-time decision that determines where we go when we die. But in reality, Jesus spent way more time teaching about how we ought to live *on earth*. Following Jesus is more than a one-time decision, it’s *a way of life* that impacts every nook and cranny of who we are. John Mark Comer, pastor and bestselling author, says, “For Jesus, salvation is less about getting you *into heaven* and more about getting *heaven into you*.”

Paul also makes it clear that the ultimate goal of following Jesus is to *become like Jesus!* We are to “grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ” (4:15) and we are to put on our new selves “after the likeness of God” (4:24), being “imitators of God” (5:1).

The reality is we are all being formed. We’re all becoming someone whether we realize it or not, whether we’re intentional about it or not. As Christians, we believe that the best life, the truest most fulfilling life, is one that comes through following the Way of Jesus and becoming his disciple, which means ordering our lives with the chief goal of becoming like Christ.

Around here, we define discipleship (or spiritual formation) as knowing what Jesus knew and doing what Jesus did, so we can become like Jesus. Take a minute to talk about this idea with your group. Think about the following questions:

- Who had the greatest impact on the person you are today? How have they shaped you as an individual?
- What three qualities or characteristics would you most like to be known for?
- What do you think makes Jesus someone worth following?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What stuck out to you about the reading from this week? Was there a verse or idea that was particularly meaningful or challenging for you?
2. Who or what do you spend the majority of your time with? Who or what influences your daily habits or routines? What do these habits or routines tell you about what you live for and value most?
3. Do you find yourself more often building Jesus into your life or building your life around Jesus? Why is that?
4. Spiritual gifts can be defined as any talent, skill, or ability that is empowered by the Spirit and useful in ministry to the church. What would you define as your top three gifts? How might God be inviting you to use these gifts in service of God and others?
5. Read Ephesians 4:15-21 together. Rev. Matt Tuggle often says, “The stuff you stuff yourself with will be the stuff you are stuffed with.” What are you currently “stuffing” yourself with? What impact do you think this has on your perception of the world or your relationships?
6. Read Ephesians 4:25-32 together, remembering that every “you” in Ephesians is a “y’all.” What does this passage reveal about the power and importance of living in community?

WEEKLY PRACTICE

Twice in this week’s reading, Paul encourages us to practice gratitude. First in Eph. 4:4, saying, “Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.” And again in 5:20, “giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Clearly, Paul views the practice of gratitude as an essential part of how we follow Jesus.

We talk all the time about the way modern research backs up this claim. Expressing gratitude, intentionally focusing our attention on the positive around us, actually retrains our brain to

notice more of the positive instead of just the negative. This week, take time each morning to journal and pray about at least five things you're thankful for. Try not to repeat any items day to day, be as specific as possible, and do yourself a favor by digging deeper than the obvious.

If you want to take it a step further, reach out to someone you're thankful for and share with them why you're grateful for them. This could be through a text message, email, or face-to-face. Consider how you might make gratitude a regular part of your rhythm and routine.