TRANSFORMED IN CHRIST

# Ephesians



LifeGroups
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FALL 2026

# Without Christ

- Without Christ, our thinking leads to an empty life of worldly pleasure
- Ephesians 4:17-24
- Paul just taught the Ephesians that Christ gave leaders spiritual gifts to equip the Church so that the whole body grows up to spiritual maturity (4:12–16).

# Without Christ

- This imagery of describing the “new self” as something you “put on” like clothing may seem kind of strange because we often think about putting on clothes and taking them off each day.
- But that’s not the way Paul was talking about the new self.
- It’s more like when a child outgrows her old clothes and her parents pack them up to donate.

# Without Christ

- Putting on the old self would be like a kid digging through the donation pile to find an old pair of jeans and squeezing into them even though they're four inches too short and the waist can't be buttoned.
- This is what Paul said it's like when try to go back to our old ways after being made a new creation in Christ; those old ways just don't fit us anymore.

# Without Christ

- We may romanticize the old ways and think we want to go back, but when we do, we see the damage it does.
- We see it’s no longer what we really want.
- It’s like someone who has gone through a recovery program and then tried to go back and hang out with old friends.

# Without Christ

- This is the imagery Paul used to talk about what it looks like to follow Jesus and live in Christian community. It's not about following rules; it's about walking in newness of life. It's about living into our new identity as redeemed, beloved children of God.
- That old way of life doesn't fit us anymore because we have changed. We have grown. We are in a much better place than we were.

# Without Christ

- When Paul described the old way of life in this passage, he said it was walking “as the Gentiles do” (4:17).
- This may seem confusing because, up to this point in the letter, he had said there was no dividing line between Jew and Gentile.
- But he wasn’t talking about Gentile Christians here.

# Without Christ

- The word translated “Gentile” just means “people groups” or “nations.” It’s a word the Jews used to talk about “those other nations” who don’t know God.
- It could be used in an ethnic sense to talk about other literal nations that are not Jews or in a more figurative sense to talk about people who don’t know God, the same way we might use the word “pagan.

# Without Christ

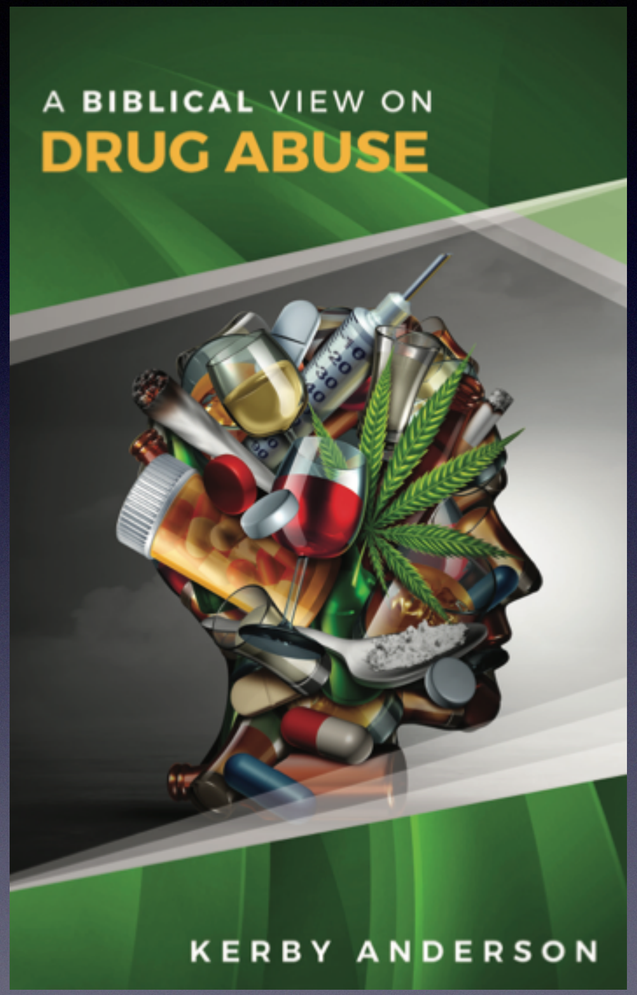
- Paul said the issue starts in the mind (4:17-18) and showed how our thinking leads to the way we live (4:19).
- Without Christ, we are separated from God, which makes us darkened in our understanding because enlightenment comes from His Spirit (4:18).
- He said this makes us callous (4:19).

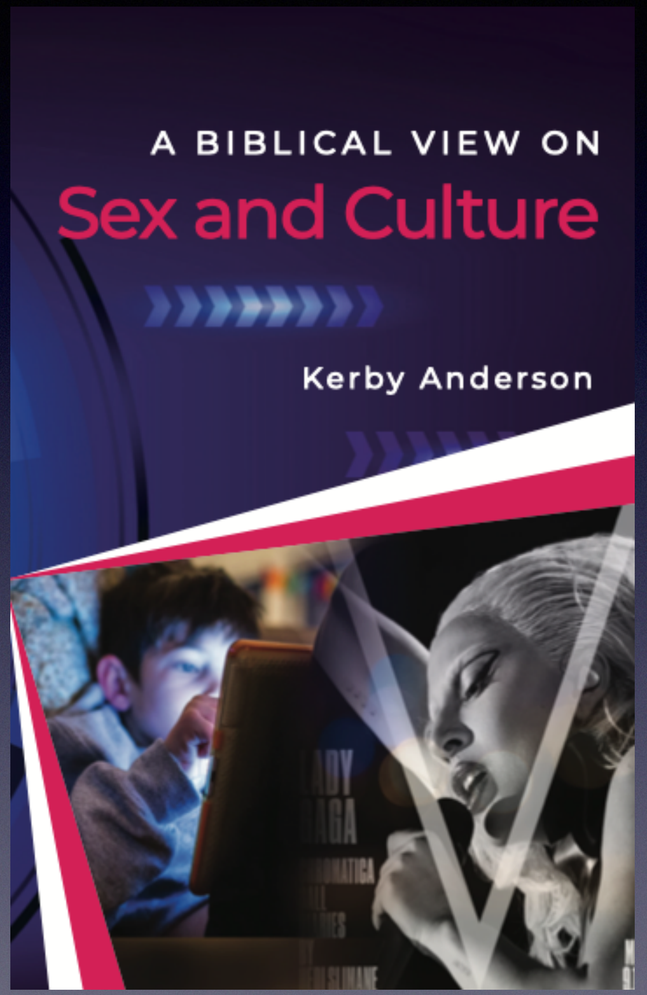
# Without Christ

- If we don’t know the hope of eternal life through Jesus, if this life is all there is, then “all is vanity and a striving after wind” (Ecclesiastes 1:14).
- This is where a humanistic worldview leads – pursuing earthly pleasure, because what else is there?
- Solomon tried pursuing pleasure but found that life to be empty (Ecclesiastes 2:11).

# Without Christ

- A focus on earthly pleasures leads to pursuing more earthly pleasures, like a downward spiral (4:19). When you take drugs, your body builds up a tolerance, and you need to take more and more drugs to get the same “high.”
- The same is true for any earthly pleasure; the more we indulge ourselves, the deeper we go into “every kind of impurity” and become “full of greed.”


A BIBLICAL VIEW ON
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# Without Christ

- We “give ourselves over” to pleasure; we let it control us (Romans 1:24–32). We become enslaved to it (Romans 6:6). A life without Christ will always lead to this.
- Some people may seem happy in their pursuit of worldly pleasures for a while.
- But it will always end in futility, despair, and callousness.

# New Self

- The old self deteriorates, but the new self gets better every day
- Ephesians 4:20-24
- Paul made a clear contrast between the old self and the new self and declared emphatically that the old self is not the way of Christ (4:20).

# New Self

- Indulging the flesh, pursuing earthly pleasures as if there is nothing more than this life – that was your old way of life before Christ transformed you into a new creation.
- But this lifestyle isn’t just a new teaching or a new set of rules to follow, it’s a new self (4:24).
- You are a different person now. You have a new identity. You are no longer that old person.

# New Self

- Paul didn’t just say, “This is the old set of rules you followed, but here is a new set of rules.” He said that was your old self; this is a new self. It really is as if your old self has died; it is gone.
- In other letters, Paul described it as being crucified and raised again with Christ, so that “I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (Romans 6:5–7; Galatians 2:20).

# New Self

- Earlier in this letter, he said our new selves are God's workmanship (2:10). Paul used the language of "putting off" the old self and "putting on" the new self as if it were clothing, but this isn't meant to be a back-and-forth kind of thing.
- "Putting off" means to lay aside, stow away, or renounce. We are meant to take off that old self and throw it away.

# New Self

- Living our lives in pursuit of earthly pleasures will destroy us.
- Drug addiction provides a tragic picture of this: What promises pleasure or escape ultimately enslaves and destroys a person. Their pleasures are killing them.
- The same is true for all kinds of sin, though it may not be as physically obvious as drug addiction. Sin destroys us.

# New Self

- “Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 4:16).
- As we “grow up” into spiritual maturity, we only get better with age (4:14–16).
- In the new self, we find the purpose and meaning we could never find in a life pursuing pleasure. We find true joy and abundant life (John 10:10).

# Community of Christians

- A community of Christians living by the new self will live in love
- Ephesians 4:25-32
- Then Paul shifts from an individual to a corporate focus.
- He returns to the same “put away” language in verse 25.

# Community of Christians

| Old Self | New Self |
| --- | --- |
| Put away falsehood | Speak truthfully |
| No longer steal | Share with the needy |
| Let no corrupting talks | Build up one another |
| Put away bitterness | Be kind and forgiving |

# Community of Christians

- Paul grounded these practical instructions in theological truths.
- We speak truth because we are members of one another.
- We deal with anger promptly so that we do not give the devil an opportunity.
- We work so we can share with those in need.

# Community of Christians

- We use words that build others up because corrupt speech grieves the Holy Spirit. Finally, we forgive one another because God has forgiven us in Christ.
- The warning not to grieve the Holy Spirit is most immediately connected to the discussion of corrupting speech in verse 29, although all the sins mentioned in this section grieve Him.

# Community of Christians

- Each of these “old self” behaviors are ways we tend to be self-centered and look out for our own needs, while the “new self” behaviors are ways we look out for others’ needs.
- Speaking the truth is a desire to be honest about who we really are and build authentic relationships with each other.

# Community of Christians

- All these shift the focus from what we may think is best for ourselves to considering what is best for others and for the community as a whole.
- Putting others' needs ahead of your own is the very definition of humility, which is what Paul described as having the mindset of Jesus in our relationships with one another (Philippians 2:1–5).

# Community of Christians

- This is how we live in a Christ-centered community: we all put one another's needs ahead of our own (Romans 12:3–21). When we all do it, everyone's needs get met without anyone having to hoard for themselves.
- This is how we find unity in the diversity of the body. This is what it looks like to be His people, loving each other the way Christ has loved us (John 15:12).

# Resources from Last Week

