

WEEK 6 | *EPHESIANS 4:17-5:20*

LIVING LIKE SAINTS

Who are you? We tend to align ourselves with a tribe—perhaps a favourite footy team, or others who share our sexual preference. We can gain a sense of identity from our association with those like us. But it can also exclude people who aren't like us.

For many people, their core identity would be measured like this:

*I am John, a Gen X Caucasian
heterosexual male accountant.*

*I am Kim,
a 35 year old Asian mum.*

*I'm Tom; I'm an Aussie tradie,
I drive a Holden, and I support the Broncos.*

Some of these things may not seem to run very deep, but come Anzac Day or the footy grand final we'll cling to those identity markers pretty strongly. After all, we've got to find our identity somewhere!

In Ephesians 4:17-5:20, Paul makes the astonishing call on his readers to leave their old identity behind, and find a whole new identity—and way of life—in **Christ**. Their old identity as **Gentiles** (Greeks, Italians, Scythians, etc.) is swept away as they become members of **God's Saints**.

Read the passage (slightly amplified) here:

Ephesians 4:17-5:20

17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you [gentiles by birth] must no longer live as the [rest of the] Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. 19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

20 That, however, is not the way of life you learned 21 when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbour, for we are all members of one body. 26 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold. 28 Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for **building others up** according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. [5] 1 Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself

up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

3 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper **for the Saints**. 4 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. 5 For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. 7 Therefore do not be partners with them.

8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord. 11 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. 13 But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light.

14 This is why it is said:

"Wake up, sleeper,
rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you."

15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. 18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. In week 1, Paul said those who were Gentiles by birth (non-Jews like us) had in the past been excluded from citizenship with God's people. They were "hopeless"! But times have changed.

Who should they no longer live like? (4:17-20)

Who should they live like instead (5:3)?

Paul made the same point back in 2:19-20:

"Consequently, you who are Gentiles by birth are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the Saints and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone."

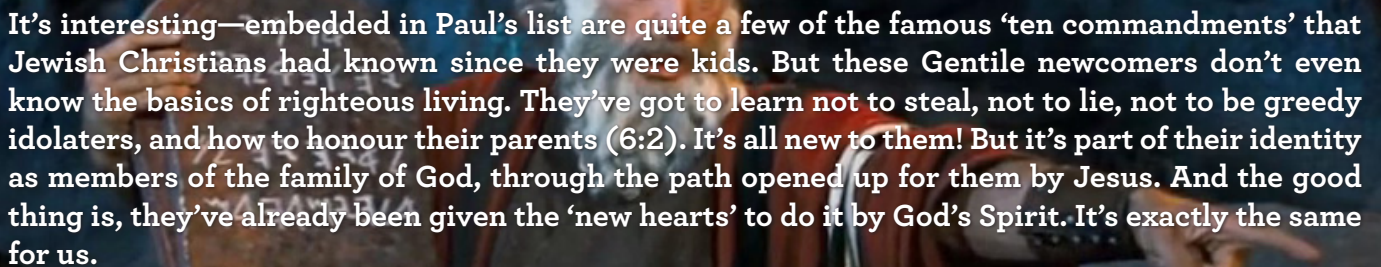
These Gentile Christians have a whole new citizenship—a whole new identity—a whole new way of looking at themselves. And it's going to make a profound difference to the way they live.

2. Paul draws a contrast in 4:20. In what way did the Ephesians learn Christ?
3. What does this change in verse 22-24?
4. These Gentile converts are learning a whole new language and culture. But the important thing to notice is that their *identity* has changed already. Underline or circle the descriptions of their new identity (e.g. they are, they have been, you were, you are, etc.) in the passage above from 4:25 onwards.
5. How does Paul summarise the 'old' Gentile way of thinking in 4:18-19, and how does this play out in their actions? How does this compare with Australia today?
6. Paul talks about 'darkness' in 4:18, and again in 5:8-13. What will light do?

What has the light exposed in your life that needs to change?

7. These Ephesians have a whole new self! It's a radical makeover. Tick or highlight at least 9 positive things in the passage (on page 20) that they should do differently, and 14 things they should avoid as this change in identity takes place.
8. Which of these new behaviours do you struggle with the most?
9. How fundamental to your own sense of identity is the fact that you're a saint, a child of light, a member of the body of Christ?

The way we behave flows naturally from who we think we are! How much does your identity as a member of the saints through Christ affect your behaviour?



It's interesting—embedded in Paul's list are quite a few of the famous 'ten commandments' that Jewish Christians had known since they were kids. But these Gentile newcomers don't even know the basics of righteous living. They've got to learn not to steal, not to lie, not to be greedy idolaters, and how to honour their parents (6:2). It's all new to them! But it's part of their identity as members of the family of God, through the path opened up for them by Jesus. And the good thing is, they've already been given the 'new hearts' to do it by God's Spirit. It's exactly the same for us.

Change is always hard. Staying the same is so much easier! To help you think differently, as a step toward acting differently, try actually memorising the following verse. See if you can let it guide your identity and behaviour in the coming week.

Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Ephesians 5:1-2



For an example of what this change can look like in practice, watch Youthchurch leader Ryan share how Jesus changed him at

mpc.org.au/whoareyou