**1. Motivate**

How have you experienced the power of encouragement in your life?

* roommate encouraged me about a tough class
* band director told me I’d done well
* teacher said “good job” on an assignment
* good marks on a job evaluation
* family expressed their pleasure over the new dessert
* spouse congratulated me, expressed pride on my finishing the new degree
* pastor express appreciation for the special music
* class members thanked me for teaching them
* our family owned store was voted “best in town” in our category
* a medal awarded during military service

A video introduction is available. View at <https://watch.liberty.edu/media/1_h1whd5e1> . If you have no Wi-Fi where you teach, best to download to your computer from <https://tinyurl.com/y2gs4pen>

* came in first in the class on a particular exam

**2. Transition**

We need the encouragement of others—and they need ours.

* Today we study Paul’s comments on how that is especially true within the Body of Christ

**3. Bible Study**

3.1 Put Away Sinful Habits

Listen for Paul’s warning.

Ephesians 4:17-22 (NIV) So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as 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, with a continual lust for more. 20 You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. 21 Surely you heard of him 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;

What warnings does Paul issue?

* don’t live the way you see unbelievers live
* don’t live the futility of a life separated from God
* don’t allow your heart to be hardened due to ignoring God’s Truth

Let’s list words and phrases Paul used to characterize the Gentile (pagan) lifestyle.

* futile thinking
* darkened understanding
* separated from God
* allowing hearts to become hardened
* giving themselves over to sensuality
* indulging in all kinds of impurity
* continual lust for more

How should the believer act differently?

* listen to God’s Truth
* live in accordance with that Truth, obey it, heed it
* put off former way of life
* don’t allow yourself to be corrupted by all those deceitful desires

What are some typical aspects of our old nature of which we struggle to rid ourselves?

* anger
* lust
* overindulging in our diets
* vocabulary – swearing, dirty jokes, taking God’s name in vain
* the type of entertainment we see
* how we use/waste our time
* gossip – talking about others – making fun of them, making judgments about them, condemning them
* fear and worry

What makes “taking off the old self” so difficult?

* it’s the way we’ve lived all our lives
* we are born with a bent, a tendency to sin
* people around us, family and friends may still be living that way – peer pressure
* any habit is hard to change
* we live in a sinful world – temptations are all around us

3.2 Living Consistent with New Life in Christ

Listen for changes evident when following Christ.

Ephesians 4:23-28 (NIV) 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 his neighbor, 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 He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.

 What analogy does Paul complete here to describe the change in behavior between the old person without Christ and the new person with Christ?

* if we “put off” the “old self”, then …
* we should “put on” the “new self”
* similar to a change of clothes, from the old smelly, dirty, raggedy outfit, to a new clean and presentable suit of clothes

What are some specific changes in lifestyle addressed in these verses?

* quit lying, instead tell the truth
* in your anger, don’t sin
* don’t go to bed angry
* don’t give the devil a foothold … don’t become involved or entangled in an activity or attitude that the devil can use to entrap us all over again
* do honest work

The passage seems to say that it is possible to be angry without sin. What kinds of problems can anger lead to if it becomes uncontrolled / abusive (physical, verbal, emotional)

* destroying relationships
* slander
* lying
* saying things you are sorry for later on

What do you think is the key to being angry but avoiding sin?

* recognizing the anger and backing off
* find an acceptable physical outlet (chopping wood, playing the piano loud, sweeping the house, raking the yard, etc.) to burn off the adrenaline
* talk to God about it
* commit the problem to God
* if possible, avoid situations where you know you will be angry
* the old, “count to 10 before you say anything” routine

What do you think is involved in being “made new in the attitude of your minds”?

* filling our minds with the right things (God’s Word)
* allowing God to develop within us the Fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, long suffering, faithfulness, gentleness)
* making the right choices about what we look at and listen to
* learning to have different attitudes about people … less and less anger, more and more love

What do you think Paul meant by “deceitful desires”?

* temptations that look good at first, then turn out to be not so great
* when you get fooled by something that looks better than it is
* when we lie to ourselves, rationalize wrong behavior

What steps does one take to leave the past behind?

* you decide to quit doing those wrong actions
* you make a decision to start doing the right things
* don’t rehearse in your mind all those wrong things you did
* busy yourself with the new activities in the right direction
* specifically thank God for the forgiveness he has provided
* every time you remove something old from your life, replace it with a characteristic of the new life

3.3 Encourage Others with Your Words

Listen for important practices of the Christian life.

Ephesians 4:29-32 (NIV) 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.

What purpose should our words serve?

* helpful words
* words that build others up
* words and actions that minister to people, benefit them

The unwholesome or “rotten” talk mentioned in the passage refers to trees that produce bad fruit. What kinds of things might this mean besides profanity or obscenity?

* off color jokes, stories with double meanings
* abusive talk
* putting down others, gossip
* arguing all the time
* making light or joking about spiritual things
* always making jokes about *everything*, never being serious

How can unwholesome talk affect others negatively?

* it is a bad role model for children, for new believers
* it can discourage people who are put down
* it is hurtful
* it makes us insensitive to precious spiritual truths
* it is a bad testimony before unbelievers … they see no difference between their own behavior and the foul mouthed person claiming to be a Christian

 What are the positive commands Paul gives here?

* be kind
* be compassionate to one another All because Christ forgave you!
* forgive each other

What are some keys to putting into practice Paul’s alternative … speaking what is helpful, building others up?

* remember the principle of Garbage In, Garbage Out … don’t feed your mind with “rotten” talk (entertainment, gossip sessions, etc.)
* memorize scripture instead
* find an accountability partner who will support you in prayer, check up on you
* practice looking for good things to say to/about people, encouraging things
* instead of criticizing people in your mind, pray for them … pray God’s blessing

Use the last page as a handout so your learners can take home the application points of this week’s lesson.

Application

Talk to God.

* Through prayer, ask God to bring to light any words, phrases, or patterns of speech that you need to “put away.”
* Ask God for the grace needed to speak words of life and encouragement instead.

Talk to yourself.

* One of the best ways to “talk to yourself” is speaking the Word of God to yourself.
* In that light, consider memorizing Ephesians 4:29: “No foul language should come from your mouth, but only what is good for building up someone in need, so that it gives grace to those who hear.”

Talk to others.

* Identify three people who might be encouraged by your words.
* Write cards, craft emails, send texts, or meet with each of them face to face to encourage them in their walk with Jesus.

Crossword Puzzle

Clues and words taken from
Ephesians 4:17 – 32 (NIV)

Down

2. benefit those who \_?\_

4. don't give the \_?\_ a foothold

6. in your \_?\_ do not sin

7. bitterness, \_?\_, and anger

8. continual \_?\_ for more

9. every form of \_?\_

10. with his \_?\_ hands

13. hardening of their \_?\_

16. \_?\_ truthfully

Across

1. put off your \_?\_ self

3. members of one \_?\_

5. \_?\_ no longer

11. new in the \_?\_ of your minds

12. the \_?\_ that is in Jesus

14. no \_?\_ live as Gentiles

15. building \_?\_ up

17. don't \_?\_ the Holy Spirit

18. \_?\_ and compassionate