

Distinctly Different

Ephesians 4:22-24

August 16, 2009

Intro - Even though Christians face the same challenges non-Christians face, the Christian life is a life that is distinctly different. Scripture says that we are, “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people”. (Some are more peculiar than others)

Being a “peculiar people” means we are distinctly different. The word peculiar means distinctly different.

Illust - At the age of 20 years, I was perhaps the youngest sworn paid police officer in San Diego County and perhaps the entire state of California. I could go into a bar to break up a fight, but I couldn't go back to that same bar after work. I was so young my mom had to buy the ammunition for my revolver!

At that age I had a particular idea of what defined a man. Let's face it, there's a great deal of power in being a police officer. I used to love pulling people over and giving them traffic tickets. I loved it when people slowed down when I pulled out into traffic. That's powerful! At 20 years of age that kind of power can also be dangerous because it shapes your thinking about what kind of person you are.

Over the years God has changed my understanding of what it means to be a man and I've gleaned some insights of how to be a godly man and become distinctly different.

Ephesians 4:22-24

As we read through the text we see that we are to put off the old self and put on the new self. The text lists taking off first so we might think that is the order in which these tasks should be accomplished.

That's a natural conclusion. We think in a linear fashion, we see the text laid out in a linear fashion, so we assume that is the order of how things are accomplished. However, in reality we must first:

I. Put on the New Self

- 1 The words used for new self literally mean “fresh” or “new” person.
- 2 One commentary says, “The connotation is not a renovated nature, but a new altogether different nature”

- 3 It's a nature that is completely new! A nature that is distinctly different.

2Co 5:17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

Illus –I've noticed that the “back to school” sales and signs are up. When I was younger I enjoyed the “back to school” time of year because we'd get new clothes and school supplies and it was like we were, in some ways, starting over.

- 4 Can you create for yourself a new nature? No! In order to put on a new self, we must be made new. Another way to say that is that we must be given a new nature.
- 5 Putting on the new self is not a “pull yourself up by your boot straps” or reading the latest self help book.
- 6 It's not the “power of positive thinking” or the power of “good thoughts”, it's distinctly different.

A. It begins with being in Christ.

- 7 We need to be “in Christ” in order to be made new; in order to put on the new self.

John 3:1-7 (The story of Nicodemus)

- 8 This is where it starts. You must be born again. Once you are born again, you are “in Christ”.
- 9 Even if you were raised in a Christian home, your parent's faith is not your faith. You must decide for yourself to choose Christ. It must start with a decision.
- 10 Once you've made the decision, it's a new beginning. God's just getting started with you.

Illus – I heard a great illustration on the radio this week about a couple who wanted a memorable vacation. One of the nights while on vacation, they decided to stay at a really, really fancy hotel. When they went to their room they found there was no bed!

- 1 Some people are like that in their faith. They get started but they don't go any deeper (perhaps because they don't know how) and they miss out on the many blessings God has for us.
- 2 Press in! How? He tells us in verse 23.

B. Be renewed in the spirit of your mind

- 1 The original Greek helps us understand that this is a continuous ongoing process, not a onetime event. This means to be continually renewed in the spirit of your mind.

Rom 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

- 1 We are warned not to have our thoughts, attitudes and actions shaped by the world, but instead be “transformed” or changed by the renewing of our mind.
- 2 We renew our mind, by having the mind of Christ.

1Co 2:14-16 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things...for we have the mind of Christ.

- 11 Having the mind of Christ simply means we have Christ’s perspective.
- 12 Having the mind of Christ is also distinctly different. But are we blind to His perspective?

Illus – Soon after Kelly and I had come to the Lord, we had a Christmas party at our house for several people from the church. I guess I said a few things to her in an unkind way. OK, I was snippy with Kelly. Soon after, a friend helped me realize I’d hurt her. He told me, “I saw her wilt” and encouraged me to love her as Christ loves the church.

- 2 He helped open my eyes to Christ’s perspective so that I could be transformed by the renewing of my mind.

Rom 10:17 So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

- 3 Our transformation is a series of “Aha!” moments where the eyes of our heart are opened.

Eph 1:18 *I pray that* the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

- 4 As the eyes of our heart are opened, we gain perspective and understanding.

- 5 Christ's perspective must be spiritually appraised. It cannot be understood as head knowledge alone. That's what Paul is explaining in Eph 3: 18-19

Eph 3:18-19 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

- 13 We see things from His perspective, we have spiritual discernment, we are transformed and our minds are renewed and we are distinctly different as we:

II. Lay Aside the Old Self

- 14 The old self that Paul talks about in verse 22, represents our old way of life. It represents our old way of thinking, acting and attitudes. It's our old habits.

- 15 There is a secret to how we go about laying aside the old self and that secret is...

A. Abide in Christ

- 1 Jesus taught us the principle of being attached to the vine.

John 15:4-5 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

- 1 It's interesting that Jesus uses the metaphor of bearing fruit because Paul uses the very same metaphor in Galatians.

Gal 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Illus – Have you ever gone into a vineyard or orchard or berry farm and listened carefully? Do you hear sounds of straining, or grunting coming from the plants? No! The branches produce the fruit as they are supplied by the sap.

Illus – Hudson Taylor understood this principle of abiding in Christ and wrote about it to his sister. The letter was published in a book called “Hudson Taylor’s Spiritual Secret” (Read excerpt)

- 1 The results of his ministry are far reaching and his life has had a huge impact for the cause of Christ and echo throughout China to this day.

- 2 Abiding in Christ gives you power to lay aside the old self.

Illus – Peaches are in season right now. I’ve seen some pictures of people picking peaches and Oregon produces some of the most wonderful, juiciest, tastiest peaches in the country. But what would happen if you picked a peach off the tree if it was green or only partly ripe? Not only would that peach not fully ripen, but it would die and rot. It must remain attached to the tree. It must “abide” until it is fully ripe.

Php 1:6 *For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*

- 2 Staying connected and abiding in Christ so that He can perfect the good work He began in us, will make us distinctly different.

B. Putting on makes us put off

- 3 Jesus taught us this principle in John 12

Joh 12:24 *Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.*

Illus - The wheat kernel is surrounded by a hard husk. As it falls to the ground the life within it grows and pushes away the husk. The hard husk represents our old habits, attitudes and behaviors. As the new life of Christ within us grows, it breaks through, pushes away the old self and gives way to the new self.

- 4 The result is that we have new abilities
- 1 If you are in Christ, you have power to say, “no” to sin.

Php 4:13 *I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.*

- 5 If you are in Christ you have freedom.

Gal 5:1 *It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.*

- 2 The words of the Hymn “Turn your eyes upon Jesus” capture the heart of this point:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.

- 3 Laying aside the old self happens when we draw near to the Lord and abide in Him.

Conclusion – We are not left alone to develop Christ like character and live a life that is distinctly different. God, through His Holy Spirit causes us to bear fruit, simply as a result of our drawing near to and abiding in Jesus.

Jas 4:8a Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

The ultimate taking off and putting on has to do with our salvation. Bending our knee to Jesus and accepting Him as Lord and Savior is the ultimate taking off and putting on.

You take off your debt of sin and exchange it for the Righteousness of Christ, and everlasting life.