

# BaptistWay: Live the new way of Christ

September 29, 2014

- *The BaptistWay lesson for Oct. 12 focuses on Ephesians 4:17-5:20.*

[Len Sullivan's grandmother](#) tolerated her home. In the late 1920s, she and her husband married and moved into his family's old clapboard house. In the '30s, Len's grandparents decided to tear down the building and construct another to be their home for the rest of their lives.

Much to his grandmother's dismay, many of the materials of the old house were re-used in their new house. Everywhere she looked, "she saw that old house—old doors that wouldn't shut properly, crown molding split and riddled with nail holes, unfinished window trimming. It was a source of grief to her. All her life she longed for a new house."

## **Resurrections, not rearrangements**

Our lives in Christ, the Apostle Paul says, must be different than they once were. They aren't pieced together from our past; we're not just recycling things that were broken before we started. Rather, we have new, grace-filled lives. They aren't rearrangements; they're resurrections.

Solomon said it's the thoughts within a person that make what he/she is (Proverbs 23:7), and Jesus tells us good and evil come out of what is stored in our hearts (Luke 6:45). Thus alerted, Paul warns our former way of thinking is "futile" and "dark," seasoned with lust and depravity (Ephesians 4:17-18). This kind of thinking kept us separated from God, driving us further away from him and hardening our hearts. Impurity and greed are their chief calling cards (v. 19).

That may be who you were, Paul says, but that's not who you are anymore. We didn't learn that from Christ, and it no longer needs to be a part of our life and character. As we allow Jesus to change our minds and attitudes, he changes our actions (vv. 20-21), and they will be starkly different from the culture that surrounds us.

Paul then admonishes the Ephesians with clear, concise directions. Some of the instructions are what not to do, others are behaviors they should take up—not because actions change character, but because character is exposed by actions. These are guidelines, not rules. They won't make someone a Christian, but rather will reveal the Spirit and words of Christ dwelling within (Ephesians 1:13-14; Colossians 3:16).

### **Put away the old life**

Christ-followers must put away all things that belong to the old way of life, for these issues lead believers away from a grace-filled life. We can't let anger rule over us, since it leads to self-destruction (Proverbs 19:19). Stealing can't be part of our nature (Exodus 20:15). Our mouths are not to speak unwholesome—literally, rotten—words, but instead those profitable for hearers (Proverbs 15:4; 18:21; James 1:26; 3:1-12).

Bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander and malice all should be far from our hearts and lips. Quite simply, get rid of the old ways of life altogether—they were dead anyway (2:1-5).

It's easy to fool others into thinking something is true about us, at least for a time. Take for example, [Conrad Zdzierak](#), a 30-year-old white man. In 2010, Conrad employed two high-quality silicone masks—designed for use in movies—to transform himself into a black man.

Using the masks, he carried out a string of robberies in Ohio stealing

approximately \$15,000. The disguise was so good, the police sought the wrong ethnicity of person from the beginning, even arresting someone who looked like Conrad's character. More remarkable is the fact that "the mother of the wrongly accused man even thought a photo of the robbery suspect she saw on television was a photo of her son." Conrad almost got away with his crimes, but when his girlfriend found the two masks and a large stash of money, she turned him in to the police.

Paul wants the Ephesian church to not simply look the part, he wants them to be the real deal. His desire is for believers to truly, authentically, "be—a powerful verb of existence in Greek, *ginomai*, meaning "to be created, produce or grow"—several things:

**Be kind, compassionate and forgiving (4:32)**—inverted from selfishly protective to selflessly forgiving, offering grace and mercy instead of justice.

**Be imitators (5:1)**—in Greek, this word literally means "mimicker." Be exactly what Jesus was. What character traits Jesus exhibited, we should too. What he didn't, we shouldn't either.

**Be loving and sacrificial (5:2)**—putting others needs ahead of our own. Seeking to serve, not to be served, even if it means laying down our lives.

**Be cautious (5:3-7)**—acting without prudence and discretion can lead to problems, danger, even destruction. Paul commands believers to guard against greed, guard our morality and purity (v. 3), our words (v. 4), our yearnings and desires (v. 5), our beliefs (v. 6) and the company we keep (v. 7).

**Be children of light (5:8-14)**—Using a favorite New Testament analogy, Paul contrasts those in Christ as walking in light and those outside of Christ as walking in darkness. We should expect those in

darkness to stumble and fall, but those in Christ should be able to see where pitfalls are and avoid them.

**Be careful (5:15-17)**—wisdom will help us make choices that use our time well, preserve us from danger, and help us fulfill God’s calling on our lives.

**Be filled with the Spirit (5:18-20)**—If we are controlled by a substance rather than the Spirit, he can’t fully empower, strengthen, guide, comfort, love or lead believers to pursue and fulfill all the aforementioned character traits. His filling overflows into thankful worship and meaningful (even life-changing) conversations that benefit Christ’s kingdom.

Believers can’t live apart from the world to practice and exhibit these traits; we must live and be these things as we interact with the lost and dying, in the context of a corrupt and distorted culture. We can’t wear masks like Conrad Zdzierak. Our true natures will be discovered and revealed, and then we’ve hurt those within the body of Christ with our lack of authenticity, and we’ve hurt the cause of Christ with those who don’t know him as Savior.

Look again at the list of character traits. Choose the one most difficult for you to display. Will you commit to exercising your faith muscles and drawing upon the power of the Holy Spirit in your life to strengthen this area? What is one thing you’ll do this week to take a positive step toward demonstrating this characteristic so those around you will see the overflow of Christ’s work in your life.