

## **SESSION 7 (Joint): A MAN WHO IS DIFFERENT (Ephesians 4 v 17-28)**

### **THE BIG IDEA:**

Christian men won't live like those around us, because we've taken off our "old selves" and now live God's way. We must expect to be different!

### **GUIDANCE FOR QUESTIONS:**

1-2. This is to introduce the idea of an old top and new top (or "self", v 22 and v 24)—one which you love to wear, the other which has been thrown out or is always left at the back of the wardrobe! You might like to come back to this idea after Q5, and point out that the behaviour which belongs to the "old self" should be just as alien to us, seem just as ridiculous to us, as putting back on a top we threw out ages ago because we hated it.

3. Old self = being corrupted (ie: ruined) by its deceitful desires ie: our feelings, which tell us doing something is a good idea, but which are lying to us.  
New self = like God (wow!), in true (not deceitful) righteousness (living rightly) and holiness (purity).

You might like to have a coloured, preferably black, shirt to visualise the old self and a white shirt for the new self and take the black one off and put the white one on, and then lay them on the floor/table to use later on whenever necessary.

4-5. These questions are simply to make the point that if we take v 22 and v 24 seriously, we cannot expect to be similar to non-Christians around us. If we live as Christians, we'll be wearing a white shirt among people who wear black shirts, and of course that's noticeable. It's only if we put our old self back on that we will blend in. So, especially for teenagers, this isn't easy at all, and it's good to encourage the teenager to recognise this – if he doesn't, he will simply end up blending in with everyone else when things become hard. You might like to point out that when we are different to those around us because we are trying to live God's way, this is a sign that we're on the right track, not that something is wrong!

6. A Gentile (ie: non-Christian) is separated from the life of God. They do not have the spiritual life, the eternal perfect life, that only God can give (as we saw in 2 v 1-10).

7. No! "Lust" means a desperate desire for something. The things non-Christians do because they think it will satisfy them are never really satisfying. We always feel we need more of it.

You might like to think of examples from your own past of this, in case the teenager can't think of any or simply hasn't experienced this. One example would be getting drunk—it doesn't really satisfy, and we will need to do it again the next time anyway. Or our exam grades—we may get an "A", but there'll always be another exam we then feel we must do well in. It never seems enough.

8. Hopefully, the strength of the words Paul uses: futility (ie: uselessness), darkened, ignorant, hardening. Paul is talking about *our* non-Christian friends. And he's saying that there is a total difference between a Christian teenager and a non-Christian teenager. It's not that they're basically the same, but one happens to be a Christian. It's that everything about how they think, feel and act should and will be different. Point out to your teenager that this isn't how we tend to think about our friendship group and our world!

9. Taught. We need to be taught God's word, so that we can change our minds to see the world and our lives as God does.

10. (You might like to use stickers to put each of these "old self" and "new self" actions on the black and the white shirts, if you are using them.)

#### TABLE

V25:

Old self—Falsehood.

New self—Speak truthfully.

Why—Because we are all Christians, part of the church (Paul seems to be thinking of "neighbour" as "other Christians" here).

V 26-27:

Old self—Don't sin when you're angry, or hold a grudge.

New self—(Ask the teenager to come up with the opposite of the old self here: obeying God even when you're cross, forgiving quickly.)

Why—Because these things give the devil a chance to have influence over your life.

V 28:

Old self—Don't steal (or just expect others to give you stuff).

New self—Work hard yourself.

Why—So that you can share what you have with others (instead of making others give you things).

11. Each of us has different regular times and circumstances where living differently because we're a Christian is a particular challenge. Identifying those times is really helpful. Encourage each other to pick particular verses or truths from this passage to call to mind next time. You might like to "report back" next time you meet on how you got on.