

- F. Vv30-32 make the transition from living as children of rage to living as adopted children of God complete!



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LIVE THE STORY

The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.

- How is it that desires are both necessary for so much good to be done, and the cause of so much evil?
- How might you explain that the desires we live for define the family we are in? Why, in a letter that *adoption* is the controlling metaphor, might evil desires be addressed so strongly?
- Who is Paul writing too when he says, “You must no longer walk/live as the Gentiles do”? Why is this surprising? How does it connect to what Paul has said earlier in the letter?
- Explain why Christianity must not be held captive by a culture, but has always required belief in a morality that must not change.
- What is the central subject of a disciple’s learning per our text?
- Why must the desires in 4:17-24 be put off in order for us to walk in unity and no longer in hostility?
- Why are each of the put-offs and put-ons in 4:25-32 important for transitioning from children of wrath to children of God?

Imagining the Kingdom: Why Do I Keep Doing the Things that I Do? *How do we stop hating and start loving?*

Jerry Cisar — August 20, 2023

Text: Ephesians 4:17-32

Introduction

Our desires not only lead us to seek the kingdom of God, they stand between us and the kingdom of God.

I. Disordered Desires (4:17-19)

- A. Ephesians 4:17-24 surprised me.
 - i. Paul knows that we lie, we steal, we get angry because of our desires... our cravings... our greed....
 - ii. James 4:1-2
- B. Our disordered desires are not ours alone.
 - i. *Your evil desires are no more your own than are the good desires that God calls you to cultivate.*
 - a) Ephesians 2:1-3
 - b) John 8:44
 - ii. In vv17-24, Paul isn’t interrupting his call to unity with a list of *other sins* we need to address, he is getting to the heart of what produces hostility.
- C. Why are our evil desires what the devil’s desires?
 - i. He comes to kill, steal, and destroy.
 - ii. They are called disordered desires because they aim to slash the very life-producing fabric in the world (Gen. 1).

➤ *Order leads to life. Chaos leads back to death.*

iii. M. Scott Peck's 8-yr-old son, "Evil is 'live' spelled backward."

D. "You must no longer walk as the Gentiles walk...."

i. Because you are not. (Eph. 2:19; 3:6)

ii. We are the Israel of God (Gal. 6:16).

E. Walking According to Disordered Desires

i. How do hearts become hardened? (Rom. 1:19-23)

Hearts are hardened when we reject what God has made plain. When our hearts are darkened, we walk blind.

ii. Our desires determine our direction.

V19 ESV: "They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity...."

Love cannot be without moral boundaries. A disordered life leads to death.

II. Ordered Desires (4:20-24)

A. Biblical morality does not change with culture.

i. This is at the heart of discipleship.

ii. This disciple is to learn how to live as God's adopted child.

➤ Titus 2:11-12

iii. We have to learn a whole new way of imagining the world.

➤ Haggai 2:6-7

B. "Being made new" in the spirit or attitude of our mind is putting on a new self, literally a new human (anthropos).

C. This new human is created to be like God in true righteousness (or justice) and holiness.

III. Ordered Living (4:25-32)

A. *Why do we lie? Why do we steal? Why do we allow unwholesome talk to come out of our mouths? Why do we become bitter, filled with rage and anger? Why do we brawl and slander? Why do we hate?*

B. Why might Paul start with lying? (25)

C. Ongoing anger must be replaced by timely reconciliation (26).

F.F. Bruce: "Anger can be prevented from degenerating into sin if a strict time limit is placed on it.... Let reconciliation be effected before nightfall, if possible."

➤ Romans 12:18

D. Stealing must be replaced with working hard to help others (28)

E. Unwholesome speech replaced with building others up (29).

F. F. Bruce: "By foul speech [unwholesome speech] may be understood in this context *not only obscene vulgarity but slanderous and contemptuous talk, any talk that works to the detriment of the persons addressed or of those who are spoken about.*"