

WALK DIFFERENTLY: LEARN CHRIST!

Ephesians 4.20-21: Your new lifestyle is a result of deliberately learning Christ

Theme: Replace your old, vain lifestyle with a Christ-like lifestyle by deliberately following the Lord daily.

Today is Easter Sunday, the Day we remember and celebrate the resurrection of Christ: 1Cor 15.20.

- (1Cor 15.20-22) And it's also a day to remember and celebrate our resurrection in Christ.
- (1Cor 15.23) Obviously there is an order: New spiritual life first, waiting for our bodily resurrection later.
 - ✓ This should make a difference in our lives (passing from death to life, being “born again” and “rising from the dead” spiritual in the moment of our conversion to Christ).
 - ✓ (1Cor 15.29) Paul uses the picture of baptism to make this very point...

(1Cor 15.29) We are baptized for the dead...

- *Baptize* means *dip, immerse, or put into* (e.g., 1Cor 12.13: we are *baptized—put into* and **not** taken out of—the Body of Christ at salvation).
 - ✓ Confusion with baptism (and even with this verse, used by the Mormons to teach “proxy” Baptism) is caused by misunderstanding the term as meaning “put into and then take out of.” It means immerse.
- *Immersing* a believer in water is baptizing him, and it is “for the dead” because it is a picture of Jesus Christ being “put into” the grave (which is what Paul says: we were baptized for the dead).
- But, just as Christ did not stay in the grave, so we pull the believer out from under the water...

In Christ, we are risen from the dead (which is the entire theme of 1Corinthians 15; see: v12).

- We are pulled out of the waters after being baptized in them because we have been raised from the dead in Christ (made alive, given new life).
- That is why the person baptizing the believer will say something like this: “Buried (baptized) in the likeness of His death and raised to walk in the newness of life” (new life in Christ!).
 - ✓ (1Cor 15.33-34) That means that there is a change of lifestyle (our walk) because we have had a change of life (our salvation in Christ).
 - ✓ We strive to “sin not”: (Eph 4.17-19) To walk not at the other Gentiles walk, in vanity.
 - ✓ We strive to “wake up” to the reality of our new life in Christ and live accordingly: (Eph 4.20-21)...

(Eph 4.20-21) This means we need to learn Christ in order to learn how to walk in the newness of the life He has given us. We need to learn how to develop a lifestyle worthy of the resurrection ...

I. The Key to a Different Lifestyle: (v20) Learn Christ Daily!

A. The Contrast: “But ye...”

1. (v17) Paul just spoke of the “other” Gentiles, the Gentiles who are no Christians.
2. And he said that we are not to walk as they walk; our lives and lifestyles ought to be different than what we see around us in the world.
 - a) (v18) There ought to be a difference in our thought life (it ought not be vain like the lost).
 - b) (v19) There ought to be a difference in our daily lives (we ought to act different than they).
3. That difference (that contrast: “But ye...”) will only come as we learn Christ.

B. The Counsel: Learn Christ!

1. Don't lose the connection between the contrast and the counsel:
 - a) If you do not “learn Christ,” your walk/lifestyle (thoughts and actions; character and conduct) will look like the walk/lifestyle of the other Gentiles.
 - b) The key to a different walk/lifestyle, then, is to “learn Christ.”
2. Don't miss the difference: *Learning Christ* is different than *learning about Christ*.
 - a) Learning *about* Christ is growing in knowledge and information (which is good and where we need to *start*).
 - b) *Learning Christ* is growing in your knowledge of the *Person* by *following* Him, *imitating* Him.
 - c) The difference is often described as a “personal relationship” rather than just “academic knowledge” (and it usually depends on one's heart attitude and desire: what do you want?).
3. Learning Christ begins with learning Scripture.
 - a) (Luke 24.27) All the Scriptures, from Moses on, teach us concerning Christ (it's not mystical!).
 - b) (John 5.39) The Scriptures testify of Jesus Christ, but like the Lord says in this verse, we have to go beyond just information (just knowing *about* Jesus). But we start with Scripture!
4. Learning Christ means we *follow* Jesus (we learn the Person of the Lord by being *with* Him).
 - a) (Mar 3.14) We need to “be with Him,” not just study a Book about Him (although today we have to start with the Book because Jesus is not here physically for us to follow).
 - b) (Acts 4.13) The contrast and difference seen in the Christian's life and lifestyle is something that is the fruit of (result of) *being with* the Lord—learning Christ, the Person.
 - (1) You can be very educated in the Scriptures (like the Jewish religious leaders in this passage) and still be just like everyone else in character and conduct (our seminaries produce “Christians” just like this continually!).
 - (2) If you want to be different, then you need to *learn Christ*, and that means *starting* with Scripture and then going beyond that to actually *be with* Jesus, and follow Him, daily.
 - c) Obviously, Jesus is not here physically for us to “be with Him” like the Apostles (and He will *not* appear to us in mystical ways).
 - So, how do we learn Christ today? How do we spend time with Jesus?
5. Daily Time with the Lord: Four Practical Steps
 - a) We need some way to spend daily time in the Scripture that draws us closer, personally, to the Savior (rather than just a “Bible study”).
 - (1) I am not really a fan of the “7 Steps to Your Best Life Now!” kind of sermons. But, I would like to teach you a simple, four-step structure that helps me to spend time daily in the Word, time that is more “personal” than “academic.”
 - (2) It's more personal than academic because it is based on “two-way communication” with the Lord initiating the conversation through His Word.
 - (3) It's also more personal than academic because it seeks a practical response (submission and obedience) to what the Lord says (it touches your attitude and your actions).

b) **Step 1: Read**

- (1) We need to spend time each day (preferably first thing!) reading and marking our Bibles.
 - If you can't read well, get the Bible on CD or mp3 and read along in Scripture.
- (2) (Eph 3.3-4) In order to understand what God has communicated to us, we have to read what He wrote in the Bible (don't expect mystical revelations, visions/dreams, promptings).
- (3) It is also my personal conviction that you need to mark your Bible as you read it.
 - (a) It's too easy to read the Bible and get distracted (cares of the days, tired mind, etc.).
 - (b) The way to keep your thoughts engaged in your reading is to connect your brain with your hand: mark your Bible as you read it.
 - (c) At first it doesn't matter at all how you mark your Bible—you don't need any kind of “system,” you just need to do it.
 - i) You can highlight words with colors, underlining, boxing in, circling, connecting.
 - ii) You can jot down notes (your thoughts, cross references, prayers) in the margin.
- (4) Suggestion: Get a Bible that you can mark up and not care if you “trash” it. Then use that Bible for your daily, personal time with the Lord... and just mark it all up as you read!
 - (a) You should get a wide-margin Bible. Example: The “Note Takers” Bible from Local Church Bible Publishers.
 - (b) You should use colored pencils, not liquid pen highlighters that bleed through pages.
 - (c) You should use fine-tipped, pigma ink pens so your markings don't bleed through. Get a set that has different colors so you can mark different things different ways.
 - (d) You should always start a book in the Bible and finish it before moving on to another. It may take you a week or a or month (or more) to get through a book, but read and mark an entire book before moving on to another (don't just read where your finger falls!).
- (5) Goal in reading and marking the Bible: “Hear from God.” We want to learn something about the Lord in some way.

c) **Step 2: Reflect**

- (1) After you read (and mark) a passage, make sure you have time to reflect on what you just read. Our goal is not to “read my 10 pages” but rather to hear from the Lord.
- (2) (Ps 1.1-3) Stop reading. Go back over the passage, look at what you read and marked. Think about it. Meditate on it. Chew it up in your mind. Give it some thought!
- (3) Suggestion: Try to look for one key thought for the day. Just one!
 - (a) If you try to remember 20 different things, you'll likely remember none.
 - (b) But, focus on one think and it will usually stick with you—you will be able to meditate on that one thing “day and night” (it also makes it easy to share with others).
 - Wouldn't it be neat if people in our church showed up for services with their marked-up Bibles to ask each other, “What did God show you this week”?

d) **Step 3: Write**

- (1) (Hab 2.2) You should write down what the Lord shows you in Scripture. Make it plain so that you can read it whenever you want and “run” after it (in obedience and sharing it with others should the Lord give you the opportunity).

- (2) Writing down your thought for the day has several benefits:
- (a) It forces you to understand what you read. If you cannot write down your thought for the day in a clear, concise, succinct manner, you don't understand it and you need to give it a little more thought and meditation.
 - (b) It also makes it easier to remember (for you or to share with others for edification).
 - (c) And it gives you a daily record of your walk with the Lord (look back and see growth).

(3) Suggestions:

- (a) You can use the same wide-margin Bible to write your thought down in (e.g., you could use one specific color of ink so that your daily key thoughts stand out as separate from your other notes and markings).
- (b) You can use a separate notebook or journal (use paper! not some electronic gadget; gadgets are distracting because there are too many things to play with on them).

e) **Step 4: Respond**

- (1) After reading (marking), reflecting on the passage, and then writing down your key thought for the day... you have just heard from God through Scripture!
- (2) Pray!
 - (a) God has just initiated a conversation with you based on His Word. You should respond to Him and talk about what He has said to you. That's called communication.
 - (b) When I speak to you about some topic, and you respond to me... we communicate.
 - (c) That kind of communication with God is called prayer, but too often our prayers are more like wish lists: Gimme this... gimme that... I'd like this... oh, yes, one of those...
 - (d) By reading and meditating in Scripture, we allow God to initiate the conversation. Then we should pray according to what He just said.
 - (e) This is how to "be with Jesus" in a personal rather than academic way, even though Christ is not physically present with us today. Communication! Personal relationship!
 - (f) You can talk to him out loud or in heart. You can even write down your prayer (response) as a letter to God (He wrote you in Scripture; you can write Him back in prayer).
- (3) Obey!
 - (a) Don't just give lip-service to what the Lord told you. Do it! Follow the Lord!
 - (b) How can you specifically apply your "thought for the day" today? Write it down!

C. Review: (v20) The Key to a Different Lifestyle: Learn Christ Daily!

1. If we want to develop a walk and lifestyle that is different than that of the other Gentiles, we need to learn Christ.
2. And that means we need to spend personal time with Him daily.
 - a) We have to start with Scripture, because Christ is not physically with us today.
 - b) But we need to go beyond just some academic exercise; we need to learn the Person, Christ.
 - (1) That means we need to communicate with Him (personally) and follow Him (obedience).
 - (2) We can do that by reading and marking our Bibles, reflecting on Scripture, writing down what the Lord shows us, and then responding to Him personally in prayer and submission.
3. And this brings us to the final point of study for this morning: We need to be **deliberate**...

II. The Key to Learning Christ Daily: (v21) Follow Christ Deliberately!

A. *Deliberate: Defined...*

1. Carefully weighted and considered; willfully acted upon and carried out.
2. Intentional, purposeful, willful, premeditated, voluntary (not by chance; the deliberate is not something that “just happens”).
3. Definitely intended and done on purpose; an exercise of the will.

B. In order to learn Christ, we have to deliberately hear Him.

1. (John 10.27) In order to follow Christ (personally), you have to hear Him.
2. We hear from Jesus today through Scripture (like we just saw; it's mystical, but rather practical).
 - If a person has no interest in Scripture (the Word and words of our Lord), that person is bearing fruit that indicates he might not be saved (that's what Jesus said in John 10.27).
3. To learn Jesus, we must deliberately (intentionally, diligently, with discipline) hear Him. And that means we need to read and mark our Bibles, reflect on what we read, write it down, and respond (and that response is what we see next in Ephesians 4.21: taught by Him)!

C. In order to learn Christ, we have to deliberately be taught by Him.

1. (Luke 6.46-49) We not only need to hear Jesus' Word, but we also need to do it.
2. We need to respond to the Lord with the right attitude (willing and joyful submission) and the right actions (obedience).
3. Only then will we learn Christ, when we hear Him and are taught by Him (to live as He lived).
4. And that must be deliberate and intentional and daily.
 - a) It's not mystical. It's practical.
 - b) It's about diligently exercising the daily discipline to spend personal time with Jesus in the Word: reading and marking, reflecting, writing down what He shows you, and then responding to the Lord in word and action (prayer and obedience).
 - c) That is what it means to “learn Christ” and that is what it takes to live differently.

Conclusion: (1Cor 15.34) If we want to walk in the newness of the life we have in Christ, we need to...

1. Be saved: Without salvation, all this is just another self-help motivational message to live your best life now. A new lifestyle needs to come from new life! And only Christ can save you from death.
2. Walk differently: Replace your old, vain lifestyle with a Christ-like (Christian!) lifestyle.
 - The key to doing that is to learn Christ daily: read, reflect, write, respond.
 - The key to learning Christ daily is to follow Christ deliberately (be diligent and disciplined to spend that personal time with Christ each day... in season, out of season; when you want to and when you don't really feel like it).