

**Gathering Question:**

What does it mean to be a “new creation” in Christ? If we are in fact new creations, why do we still struggle with sin and hypocrisy? In what ways have you become “new” since you became a Christian?

## **New Life Principles**

Beginning in chapter 4 of Ephesians, Paul begins to help the Christians in Ephesus digest what he has just said in the first three chapters. He has presented to them a wonderful reminder of the glorious riches we all have in Christ and how through the sacrifice of God’s Son we have been made alive and have been unified with all other fellow believers. The dividing wall has been taken down and we have been united into one Body.

Because they have believed in Jesus and have decided to be obedient to him and to follow him in their daily lives, Paul contends that there now needs to be a distinct difference in their life styles. They should be set apart from those around them. They should stand out in their righteous and holy lives. Their interpersonal relationships should be marked by attitudes that are rarely seen among those who are worldly oriented. In a world that is overrun with bitterness, hatred, deception, and immorality, followers of Christ are to be distinguished by love, forgiveness, truthfulness, and purity.

When Paul writes about putting off and putting on certain characteristics, he is in fact talking about the process of sanctification. This is the continual process that those who have been saved by the grace of God are going through to be conformed into the likeness of Christ. The image Paul uses is like taking off dirty clothes and replacing them with clean ones. Believers must discard the filthy clothes of their old, sinful lives, and dress themselves in the clothes of Christ’s righteousness.

The Bible teaches us that the old self and the new self cannot coexist. To be sure, after a person begins to follow Jesus, sin will sometimes continue to creep into his/her life. That is simply a result of continuing to live in sinful flesh. The old life has truly already passed, continual forgiveness for sins takes place because of the blood of Jesus and God continues his process of transformation until we go home to be with him.

**Read and Reflect:**

Ephesians 4:17-32; Colossians 3:1-17

**Reflect:**

1. In what ways is life in Christ different from the ways that the "Gentiles" live? Why does he make the comparison between Gentiles and Christians?
2. What does it mean to "grieve the Holy Spirit?" In what ways can a person grieve the Holy Spirit?
3. What does Paul mean when he says that we should be "renewed in the spirit of our minds?" What is the Holy Spirit's role in that renewal process?
4. In practical terms how does a person "put off" old practices of the old, sinful life and "put on" the new practices of a life redeemed in Christ?
5. What part does knowing God's Word have in transforming us (Colossians 3:16)?