

**II. Group discussion** *Each number below includes a set of questions that relate to the scripture text. I offer a few answers, but your perspective may be better. The point is to discuss, not to get 100% agreement. Rule of thumb: the fewer questions you ask, the better. Save time for “the big question.”*

Read Ephesians 4:17-24 aloud.

1. This passage draws a line in the sand. At one time we lived a certain way, but now everything has changed. What is the change described in this reading?

What is the significance of the phrase “no longer” in verse 17?  
*Says that Christians used to be in this boat.*

In what ways have you seen such a change in your life?

2. How is the old way of life described?

What problems come from living without God?

How much of the problem results from wrong thinking?

How much of the problem results from distorted desires?  
*Hard hearts, lost sensitivity, pursuing sensuality.*

3. How does a person become “separated from the life of God”?

If you look at two small children and only one is being nurtured to love God, how much difference is there between the two?

At what point can you start to see a difference between a person who loves God and someone living apart from God?  
*There is not a magic age where Ephesians 4 contrasts become obvious. In fact, there might be stages when a spunky God-lover acts worse than a timid-spirited person living without God. Eventually, though, being in love with God transforms the believer's life for the good.*

4. What has changed about Christians (20-24)?

Do believers continue to feel selfish desires? **YES!**  
*A good question to discover the honest Christians in your group.*

How are God-lovers different when tempted by selfish desires?

5. What happens as Christ transforms us? 22-24 lists three things.  
*22 – put off the old – purge the evil habits and thoughts*  
*23 – develop a new mind – fill your life with good habits and thoughts.*  
*24 – put on the new self, like God – enter into a relationship with God that reshapes everything about you. Let him live in you.*

For over 1000 years, Christian writers have discussed three stages of spiritual growth – purging out sin, illumination/discovery of God, and union with God. How well does this match Ephesians 4?

How well does this match your experience on spiritual growth?

6. How true is this passage? Are believers really more enlightened than those who do not know Jesus? Are unbelievers really darkened and ignorant?

*Like a proverb, this passage is true most of the time. You can find people living decent, peaceful lives without Jesus and believers who appear to be ignorant, but those are the exceptions.*

Think of a non-Christian friend. In what ways do verses 17-19 fit this person's life?

How could our group encourage this person to find Jesus?

† **The big question** *If you ask only one question, let this be it. Allow at least 20 minutes. Go around the circle and give each person an opportunity to answer. It's okay if they pass, but at least they get a chance to respond.*

Which of the processes from verses 22-24 do you need to work on?  
Do you need to be eliminating bad habits?  
Do you need to be cultivating new habits and friends?  
Do you need to draw closer to Christ so that you might be more like him?

### III. Other resources

**The point** – Let God work in you to change you into the image of Christ.

#### **Prayer ideas**

**Purgation** – Ask God to show us things we need to remove from our lives and to give us the will and the wisdom to get rid of them.

**Illumination** – Pray for God to enlighten us. Show us who he is, how much he loves us, and the wonderful new life he offers us.

**Union** – Invite God to live within us and ask that we might grow closer to him.

Ask God to guide our congregation through the process of discerning whom he has prepared to preach at College Hills.

**Kid-friendly activity.** *An activity designed to help kids and adults grow in faith together. Do this first, then dismiss the kids so the adults can talk.*

Dress up relay. Bring a camera.

Before the meeting, prepare two suitcases. In each one, put:

- Adult-sized pants – the tackier the better
- Adult-sized shirt – clashes with the pants
- Belt
- Silly hat
- Sunglasses
- Boa, tie, scarf, etc.

At the meeting, divide into two teams & do a relay race involving adults & kids. Each person has to put on all the items and say “Look at me. I’m so stylish.” Then, stuff it all back into the bag and run back to your team.

Read Ephesians 4:22-24 aloud.

In the relay, what did you “put off”? Why did you hurry to get rid of the tacky clothes? How is that like Ephesians 5:22?

What happened when you ran back to your team? How is that like Ephesians 5:24? *Back in community, restored to normal clothes.*

How does this text apply to kids?

## **LIFE Group Guide**

### **Ephesians 4 – living in the light**

By John Grant (jgrant@collegehills.org)

**The theme:** **Christ calls us away from old, destructive patterns into a new, blessing-filled life.**

Jim Woodroof’s final sermon is this week, and once again he calls us to look at Jesus, particularly the unselfish what Jesus lived what he taught. As Christ’s followers, we choose the same path – away from destructive, selfish actions and attitudes and into a joyful new life. Not always easy or fun, but always satisfying and filled with God’s presence.

This LG guide looks at Ephesians 4, a passage calling believers to move from our old selfish ways into the new life in Christ. It introduces a proven path for spiritual growth. For over 1000 years, Christian writers have identified three aspects of spiritual growth:

- Purgation – purging out the sin and evil desires
- Illumination – discovering God and the wonders of his love
- Union – being united with God in a growing, satisfying relationship

These are not exactly stages, although many people experience them in sequence. Like thousands of believers through the centuries, your group may find these 3 paths a helpful way to visualize their walk with Christ.

**Leadership tip:** Recruit your replacement. If the leader couple do most of the work, they are overloaded and group members are missing the joy of giving. Pray for ways to give away a leadership task every month. Plan some absences so somebody else will have to take a turn leading.

**I. Relate** *Use a few to introduce the theme, check everyone’s spiritual pulse, and “break the ice.” No right or wrong answers – maybe goofy but not wrong! Look for opportunities to affirm and encourage through these questions.*

- ❖ What do you like most about this time of year?
- ❖ At one time, I had a bad habit of...
- ❖ What time do you get up most days?