

Ephesians Study 7

Prayer: May I respond, with your Spirit's help, to your way of being in the world

Paul uses the word “**therefore**” nine times in the rest of the book, continuously reminding us of what he said before. The church is already the holy body of Christ, God's work in the world. The repeated use of “therefore” keeps our place and behavior in church, organically connected to the one who calls us. The spotlight moves from God to us, but our part is nothing without God. (Eugene Peterson)

Reading and Reflection

Ephesians 4:17-24, 5:1-20

The gentiles lived in a culture where the imagination was shaped by mythologies with celebrity gods in a way similar to our TV and movie-fed celebrity culture. In both cases, then and now, we have this huge imagination but impoverished morality. Then, as now, it is tempting and easier to embrace the Good News while retaining the values and practices of the surrounding culture. Hence “being made new in our minds” – we have to critically think and assess in what ways we are being influenced to live under one story or another.

How does the big story that Paul is writing about, the biblical story, shape your life? In what ways are you shaped by this story or the dominant culture's story?

Write out the lists of behaviors that Paul connects to not living within the new life God has made (behaviors to put off) and the behaviors Paul connects to what God is doing (behaviors to put on). Notice how they are, respectively, either a reflection of disunity, the opposite of what God is doing, or a reflection of unity and reconciliation, the big plan of God?

Read each of these above phrases Paul writes with the phrase, “because we are all members of one body” after it. How does that change the importance of these things listed.

What are the reasons Paul sees that we should live this way? We get the reason why explicitly in 4:25, in 4:30 and in 5:1,2.

How prevalent are some of these “new” behaviors (ones to put on) in our culture today? Does this help you see where God is working in our culture?

Is there something on this list that strikes you as something our culture struggles with?

Responding to the Text

Personally, which of these old ways of thinking and behaving do you need to put off? How does it hinder Christ creating unity, bringing everything together? What is God's invitation for you this morning to put off or put on?