

## THE NEW YOU /// putting on your “new self”

**Lesson Objective:** The point of the lesson is that your students would grasp the concept of their “new self” in Christ, and commit to embracing God’s call to righteousness and holiness.

**Scripture Focus:** Ephesians 4:17-24

**Overview:** When we think about the world teenagers live in each day, with its constant emphasis on image, consumerism, and sexuality, it’s amazing what an incredible impact they can make by living as God desires them to. While Scripture is unmistakable in its call for us to verbally testify to Christ’s truth, your students have the power to make a profound statement about Christ’s presence in their lives through their actions and attitudes. In Ephesians, Paul helps us understand that we have been given a “new self,” through our faith in Christ. This “new self” is “created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” This is the power teenagers have to impact their world! They literally have the power of God compelling them to live lives of righteousness and holiness. And considering the culture in which teenagers must live every day, this is one of the most powerful tools they have to show people the difference Christ can make in an individual’s life.

## Jump In

- **Title:** Putting Me On
- **Goal:** The goal is for your students to begin to think about the idea of “putting on a new self,” and how their actions and attitudes reflect this change in their identity.
- **Set-Up:** None needed, though if you’d like, you could print some pictures of celebrities, such as athletes, actors, politicians, musicians, etc. Tape the pictures to the wall at the front of your room.

*FIRST*, explain that we live in a celebrity obsessed culture. If you choose, reference any pictures you have printed out. It’s virtually impossible not to know intimate (sometimes way *too* intimate) details of celebrities’ lives. But, sometimes this isn’t such a bad thing. Because of our information-rich world, we learn a lot about public figures. Sometimes we find they can be pretty cool people.

*THEN*, instruct students to take 30 seconds to think of one celebrity they would like to be for a day. This can be an athlete, musician, actor or actress, politician, or even a TV personality. Allow students a moment to think of their celebrity.

*NEXT*, ask students the following questions. As you call on them to answer, ask which celebrity they have chosen:

- **How would becoming this celebrity change the way you interacted with the world around you? How would your actions or attitude toward your friends change? Toward school? Toward your job?**
- **Not counting appearance, what would be the first thing people noticed about you that was different?**
- **Would you use your celebrity status to change anything in your life? What about using your status to raise awareness for a particular cause?**

- **How would being your particular celebrity change the influence you have on the world around you? Why does it matter?**

*FINALLY*, explain to your students that this fun activity actually has started you thinking about the general thrust of this lesson. Explain to students that if they were to “put on” a celebrity’s identity and “wear it around,” they would have the ability to make a certain impact (maybe positive, maybe negative) on their world. Explain to students that in this lesson, they will learn that “putting on” the new life Christ has given them has the ability to make a huge impact on their friends and on their school.

## The Big Idea

- **Title:** The New You
- **Goal:** The goal is for your students to understand the concept of their “old selves” vs. their “new selves,” and how this is made possible through their relationship with Christ.
- **Set-Up:** If you’d like, provide two sheets of butcher paper long enough to trace the silhouette of a person on each one; provide markers for students to write with. If you don’t have access to butcher paper, the activity can be done on a dry-erase board.

Instruct your students to turn to Ephesians 4:17-24. While they are turning to the passage, briefly provide some basic context:

- The author of Ephesians is the Apostle Paul. He wrote the letter to the Church in Ephesus while he was imprisoned in Rome.
- Paul wrote this letter sometime close to 62 AD, so, around 30+ years after Jesus’ death and resurrection.
- There was no real specific reason for Paul to write the letter. There was no compelling issue that needed to be addressed. Paul *did* want to let the believers in Ephesus know how he was doing in confinement, and to offer some instruction in spiritual matters.

Before the lesson, draw the silhouette of a person on each of the two sheets of butcher paper. Above one silhouette, write the word “Does Not Follow Christ.” Over the other silhouette, write the word “Christ-follower.” (If you don’t have any butcher paper, draw the silhouettes on a dry-erase board.) Tape the two silhouettes on the wall in front of the room in such a way that students will be able to write on them.

*FIRST*, depending on the age group your teaching, you may want to remind students what it means to “contrast” something with something else. Help students understand that, according to *Webster’s Dictionary*, *to contrast* means, “to compare or appraise in respect to differences.” Explain that in this lesson you will look at the contrast between people who have rejected Christ (or simply do not know Him) and those who believe in and follow Christ.

*NEXT*, explain that in the passage you are about to read, Paul uses the term “Gentile.” Explain that in most cases, this simply means a person who is not of Jewish descent. And while that meaning still applies here, Paul is really using the word to apply to all who have rejected Christ, or otherwise do not believe in God. Instruct students to listen for how Paul describes these people.

THEN, read or have a student read Ephesians 4:17-19. Once you have read the passage, ask the following questions:

- **In verse 17, Paul says the Gentiles are futile in their thinking. The Greek word for futility basically implies “irresponsible behavior.” In verse 18, Paul lists two more characteristics of these Gentiles, and gives the reason why they act like they do. Name the two characteristics, and the reason behind them.**
  - **Answer:** Two characteristics: “Darkened in their understanding” and “separated from the life of God.” Reason: Because of “the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.”

NEXT, have a volunteer, or a few volunteers, go to the silhouette marked “Does Not Follow Christ” and write somewhere on the sheet, “poor understanding of God” and “separated from God.” Explain that we can see these characteristics even today in those who have chosen not to believe in God. Then ask:

- **Paul says in verse 18 that the reason behind these characteristics is an ignorance that is the result of the hardening of these people’s hearts. By “ignorance,” Paul doesn’t mean that these people are unintelligent. What does he mean by ignorance?**
  - **Answer:** These people are ignorant, or unknowing of the things of God. It’s a spiritual ignorance. They do not know of the truth of God; maybe they had heard the Gospel, but had chosen not to believe it.
- **The Greek phrase Paul used for “hardening of their hearts” was a medical phrase to refer to the callus formed when a bone had been broken and then reset. The resulting callus was actually harder than the bone itself. How do you see people the world around you hardening their hearts to Jesus?**
  - **Answer:** Refusing to listen to any sort of spiritual conversations focusing on God or godly things; hearing some basic truths about Christ or God and choosing not to believe them; seeking God but turning away after some time before actually coming to salvation, and so on.

THEN, have a volunteer go to the silhouette marked “Does Not Follow Christ” and write somewhere on the sheet, “heart hardened toward God.” Ask students if they see this in people they know who have chosen not to follow God. Then ask:

- **What does Paul point out as the ultimate result of how these people choose to live? What do their lives look like?**
  - **Answer:** “given themselves over to sensuality,” “indulge in every kind of impurity,” “[continually] lust for more.”
- **When we hear the word “impurity,” we probably think of sexual impurity. While Paul does seem to be alluding to this type of behavior, the truth is that any behavior that goes against God’s holiness and righteousness is impure. What are some examples of ungodly behavior you see in the world around you?**
  - **Answer:** Gossip, materialism, sexual immorality, selfishness, pride, jealousy, anger, and so on.

NEXT, instruct a volunteer to go to the silhouette marked “Does Not Follow Christ” and write somewhere on the sheet, “indulge in all kinds of impurity.” Remind your students that we all have a sin-nature, but that Christ-followers have been called and empowered to live a life free from these sin-habits.

At this point, remind students that you said you would be contrasting those who do not follow Christ with those that do. Explain that Paul is about to provide the view of what it looks like when someone follows Christ. Read or have a volunteer read Ephesians 4:20-24. Then, ask:

- **Paul wrote that the Gentiles were futile in their thinking and had no understanding of God or His ways. In verses 20-21, Paul describes the relationship the Ephesian believers have with Christ. What did Paul say about how they came to know Christ?**

- **Answer:** Paul says that the Ephesians were taught about Christ according to the truth; thus, they have a true understanding of Christ based on solid knowledge of Him.

THEN, instruct a volunteer to go to the silhouette marked “Christ-follower” and write somewhere on the sheet, “True understanding of who Christ is.” Remind students that the Bible provides us with the means to have a solid base of an understanding of God. Then, ask:

- **Paul makes a big contrast here, one that is really the heart of the lesson. Let’s review: What did Paul say about the behavior of the Gentiles in verse 19?**
  - **Answer:** They lived immoral lives.
- **What does Paul say in verses 22-24 about how a Christ-follower’s life should be lived?**
  - **Answer:** Christ-followers should have lives that are marked by holiness, righteousness, and a mind focused on Christ, not the world.

NEXT, instruct a volunteer, or volunteers, to go to the silhouette marked “Christ-follower” and write somewhere on the sheet, “holiness,” “righteousness,” and “godly mindset.” Remind students that this is a picture of what our lives are to look like in the world. Then, ask:

- **What does Paul say about “how” we are to go about living this holy and righteous life? What does he say we are to do?**
  - **Answer:** Paul encouraged Christ-followers to forget about their old self (literally, to take it off like taking off a coat), and to live out our new life in Christ (literally, wearing this new life like a jacket).
- **What words did Paul use to describe our “old self”?**
  - **Answer:** It is “being corrupted by its deceitful desires.”

FINALLY, explain that this concept of our old selves vs. our new selves is at the core of living a godly life. Remind students that their “old self” is the life they led before they were saved from the penalty of their sins by faith in Christ. Jesus purchased them new life through His atoning death on the cross. Explain to students that they can’t walk around living the life of a spiritually dead sinner; it’s simply not an option. Remind them through His work on the cross, Christ has made them righteous, and has empowered them with the ability to live holy lives in the midst of their sinful worlds.

Explain that you are about to examine what this looks like in the world students live in.

## Wrap Up

- **Title:** Wearing Your New Self
- **Goal:** The goal is for your students to identify relevant, practical ways for them to live out their “new self” in their world.
- **Set-Up:** You’ll be using the silhouettes you began using in “The Big Idea.”

FIRST, explain that there is a call throughout Scripture for Christ-followers to boldly reflect Christ’s presence in their lives. Remind them that their relationship with Christ should motivate and influence all their actions.

*THEN*, ask students to think about the idea of being “clothed” or “draped” with their behavior. Explain that the image Paul was painting is one of us wearing our actions and attitudes for all the world to see, just like a shirt or a jacket. Explain that as Christ-followers, Christ has actually purchased a new “us” to be worn with pride. This new “us” is a new creation, a Christ-centered, godly-focused individual that uses his or her daily life to demonstrate to the world that he or she is changed. But, the big question is how this looks in the world your students live in each day.

*NEXT*, instruct your students to begin to brainstorm practical ways that a teenage Christ-follower can live for Christ each day through their actions and attitudes. Contextualize this in the realms of school, work, friends, and extracurricular activities. Remind students that Paul characterized the new life of a Christ-follower as a life of “righteousness” and “holiness.” As your students come up with ideas, write, or have them write their thoughts on the silhouette labeled “Christ-follower.”

*FINALLY*, when they have finished making their list, ask students to take a moment and choose one particular action or attitude that they struggle with. Challenge them to seek God in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to empower them to grow stronger in this area. Remind them that Christ has given them the power to boldly live out their “new self” each day.

Close your lesson in prayer.

