

# Bible Studies for Life: August 16

By Clay Anthony

*We Encourage One Another • Ephesians 4:17-32*



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If 2020 has done anything, it has proven that many of us are medical experts. Ask anyone in the room and you will find the many thoughts on our present pandemic. Everyone has an opinion, has a doctor friend, or has read an Internet article. We are overrun with medical terminology. You will not receive any such opinions here, but there are a few spiritual health diagnostics that are covered in today's text. The Apostle Paul is clear that the Ephesians in their day are surrounded by many opinionated people. These people have an illness for which Paul claims to have a proper prescription and if followed, all persons can be found in right relationship with God.

**The Diagnosis.** Paul refers to the Gentiles that live in Ephesus as sick people suffering from a *darkened understanding* who are living *ignorant lives* that are *alienated from God* (v. 18). That is quite the sickness. This "understanding" is best understood as being *spiritually blinded*. That is the context in which the church of Ephesus has been planted. People who are *callous* to the ways of God and are drawn to *perversions and greed* (vv. 18b-19). Imagine a doctor giving you such bad news concerning your health. This news is paramount to a death

sentence for the unbelievers of Ephesus. Their minds are not thinking right nor are their hearts bringing life. Sin has indeed left these people in a horrid condition.

**The Prescription.** Good doctors do not just give bad news. After a diagnosis comes a prescription that will hopefully alleviate the issue. To the Ephesian believers, Paul simply reminds them that all that is wrong with their surrounding culture has been *put off* at their acceptance of the Gospel of Jesus (v. 22). No longer are they to live as those around them but are to stand out as examples of what only the grace of God can do in transforming people. Like any good doctor would, Paul prescribes a regimen that, if followed, will cause a cure for the diagnosed illness. Believers are to have *renewed minds* from their old way of living and to put on a *new self* that leads to right living and holiness (vv. 23-24). Corrupt minds and hearts can only be changed through the power of God's Holy Spirit performing transformational surgery. To think that we are able to perform such a change in our own lives is likened to performing brain or heart surgery on ourselves.

**The Outcome.** Any good patient that follows doctor's orders should see results that are an acceptable outcome to their illness. The Ephesians are no exception. By following the instructions given by Paul to rid themselves of their old habits and not conforming to the culture around them, these believers will see much needed improvements in their spiritual walks. Now they will have the ability to *speak truth in love to their neighbors* (v. 25). Being angry will not be seen as a sin if it is done for the right reason (v. 26), and that anger is not something that stays inside their hearts for any length of time (v. 27). Think of Jesus dealing with the money changers in the Temple (Mark 11:15). Yes, He was angry but for the right reason. Even in our anger, along with our thought patterns and the desires of our hearts, we should always live as if we have had divine surgery performed on our lives. The greatest proof of this divine medical healing will be found in

our treatment of others. Remember the Ephesians were around people who were not always kind, and yet the great outcome they could hope for was to be forgiving people living as people who had been forgiven themselves (v. 32), Christians, live Godly lives before our lost neighbors.

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