

# **A NEW YEAR**

## **A New Me...but HOW?**

*Ephesians 4:21-27 - Since you have heard all about Jesus and have learned the truth that is in him, throw off your old evil nature and your former way of life, which is rotten through and through, full of lust and deception. Instead, there must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes. You must put on your new nature because you are a new person, created in God's likeness--righteous, holy, and true. So put away all falsehood and tell your neighbor the truth because we belong to each other. Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a mighty foothold to the Devil." (NLT)*

Nothing on Earth is perfect. Every product we buy and even the food we eat is allowed to have some acceptable level of defect. This applies to people also. *Ecclesiastes 7:20 (NLT)* tells us "*There is not a single person in all the earth who is always good and never sins.*" The fact is that you will never be sinless on earth, but it is possible to sin less. In this study, we are going to look at why it is so hard to change our defects and what it takes to actually change them.

### **Why is it so hard to change?**

Our character defects come from three sources: biological, sociological, and theological. The biological source is our genetics. Each of us has inherited some physical and emotional defects. These genetic defects may explain our inclinations but they do not excuse our sin. Our background is the sociological source. The way we were raised modeled behaviors. We learned how to respond to hurts and our defects are often attempts to meet our unmet needs. The final source is the choices we make. What we choose to do repeatedly becomes a habit. These habits can be good or bad. Our defects are often our strengths being misused.

There are four reasons why it is hard to change some of our defects:

#### **1. Because I've had them so long!**

In general, the things we want to change weren't developed overnight; they took time to develop.

#### **2. Because I identify with the bad habits!**

We often confuse our identity with our defects. By identifying with our defects, we set up a self-fulfilling prophecy. Then when we want to change, we are afraid that if we change we won't be ourselves.

#### **3. Because my bad habits have a payoff!**

We don't do things that aren't rewarded. Anytime a negative behavior is repeated there is some payoff, even if it is temporary. It may mask our pain, give us an excuse to fail, get us the attention we desire, or any number of other payoffs.

#### **4. Because Satan discourages me!**

Satan is known as the accuser. He is constantly suggesting negative thoughts to keep us from changing. He may try to tell us that we will never be able to change; it's hopeless. Or he might suggest that it will never work or people we like will walk out of our life if we change.

Now that we see why it is so difficult to change, we will look at the verses from Ephesians (at the top of this page) to see the three steps we can take to make the changes we want and need to make.

## 1. Learning the Truth.

*Ephesians 4:21 - Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.*

**Question:** According to Ephesians 4:21, who is the source of truth? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Question:** How can you encourage yourself to trust that God's Word is true? \_\_\_\_\_

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*2 Timothy 3:16 - All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17. What is the purpose of Scripture? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Question:** The secret to lasting personal change is knowing and facing the truth. What are some ways that people avoid facing the truth? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Question:** Behind our self-defeating defects, there are lies that we believe. How can you use Scripture to uncover and identify the lies they believe? \_\_\_\_\_

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## 2. Make different choices.

*Ephesians 4:22 - You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires....*

**Question:** What does Ephesians 4:22 suggest we do with our old nature? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Question:** What does it mean to "throw off" our former way of life? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Question:** Why do you think God might be waiting for you to make a decision before allowing change to happen? \_\_\_\_\_

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*Philippians 2:12-13* - Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed--not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to **work out your salvation** with fear and trembling, 13 for it is **God who works in you** to **will** and to **act** according to his good purpose.

**Question:** How does Philippians 2:12-13 recommend we work out our salvation? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Question:** What are some of the ways that we might miss God's best for our lives? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Question:** What is the difference between action from willpower and from the will and the power of the Holy Spirit? \_\_\_\_\_

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### 3. **Have a new way of thinking.**

*Ephesians 4:23* to be made new in the attitude of your minds....

**Question:** What does Ephesians 4:23 teach us about how we should think? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Question:** Every thought determines our feelings and actions. What can you do to renew your thoughts and attitudes? \_\_\_\_\_

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*Philippians 2:5* - Let the same **mind and attitude** be in **you** which was in **Christ Jesus**. (Amp)

**Question:** Who does Philippians 2:5 recommend as the source for our minds and attitudes? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Question:** What we think about is our choice. What are some specific steps that you could take to change how you think? \_\_\_\_\_

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Next steps:

Sign up for the 40 Days of Prayer campaign.