

# Jesus Changes Our Lives and Our Words



## SABBATH—AUGUST 12

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Ephesians 4:17–32; Ephesians 4:20–24; Ephesians 4:25–29; Ephesians 4:30.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Stop being the person you used to be in your old life. That person was bad because he wanted to do wrong things. Have [get from God] a new mind and heart. Be a new person. That new person has been made like [the same as] God. He does what is right [correct] and holy because he knows the truth” (Ephesians 4:22–24, WE).



Salva's team of workers dyed and cut Jose's hair.

**JOSE ANOTONIO**, age 57, was homeless. He lived on the streets of Palma, Spain, for many years. Jose had long gray hair and a dirty beard. So, he looked very old. A woman who owned a hair cutting business saw Jose on the streets. The woman's name was Salva. Salva offered to cut Jose's hair and trim his beard for free.

Jose agreed to let Salva help him. Jose sat in a chair in Salva's beauty shop. Salva's team of workers dyed and cut Jose's hair. Then they trimmed his beard. Next, Jose got new clothes. Jose sat in front of a mirror after everything was done. When he saw himself, tears filled his eyes. He asked, “Is this really me? I look so different. No one will know me!” Later, Jose added, “Salva and her crew didn't just change my looks. They changed my life.”

In Ephesians 4:17–32, Paul says that Jesus changes every part of our lives. As Christians, we become brand new people. But Jesus does more than change how we look. He gives us “a new mind and heart” (Ephesians 4:23, WE). Jesus changes our behavior. He makes us holy.

**SIN DESTROYS OUR LIVES (Ephesians 4:17–32)**

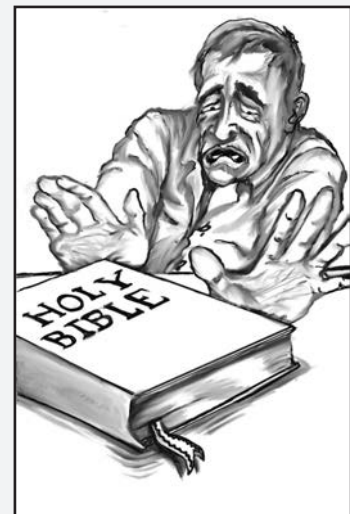
**Compare Ephesians 4:17–32 with Colossians 3:1–17. How does Paul say that Christians should live so that there will be peace and agreement in the church?**

In Ephesians 4:1–16, Paul talks about the topic of peace and agreement in the church. When we compare Ephesians 4:1 with Ephesians 4:17, we see that these two verses are very much alike. Both verses talk about how to live as Christians.

In Ephesians 4:17–24, Paul tells Christians not to live the way the non-Jews who don't believe in God live. Paul warns that living that way will destroy peace and agreement (Ephesians 4:17–19). On the other hand, the Christian way of life causes peace and agreement (Ephesians 4:20–24). Paul wants us to remember that God saves non-Jews because of Jesus. So, they can become part of God's people, too (Ephesians 2:11–22; Ephesians 3:1–13).

Paul isn't just worried about the sins or bad behavior of the non-Jews. Paul also is worried about what happens when non-Jews live in sin. They continue to sin more and more. What happens to their hearts when they continue to sin? Paul explains the danger. "I have something from the Lord to tell you. I warn you: Don't continue living like [the same as] those who don't believe. Their thoughts are worth nothing. They have no understanding, and they know nothing because they refuse to listen. So they cannot have the life that God gives" (Ephesians 4:17, 18, ERV). Do you see that Paul explains what happens to our minds and hearts when we sin? Our sin separates us from God. We can't understand spiritual things or Bible truth. Then our hearts grow hard (Ephesians 4:18, 19). Paul tells us what happens to the people who refuse to obey God: "They have lost their feeling of shame. And they use their lives for doing evil. More and more they want to do all kinds [types] of evil things" (Ephesians 4:19, ICB). Sin has separated these non-Jews from God. They have no self-control. They are separated from God's saving mercy. So, they continue to sin more and more.

**In your own experience, how has sin controlled your life? Sin is very powerful. When we sin, we want to sin more and more. Or we want to do worse sins. Why is it so hard to stop sinning?**



**Our sin separates us from God. We can't understand spiritual things or Bible truth.**

## NEW “CLOTHES” (Ephesians 4:20–24)

In Ephesians 4:20–24, Paul tells the story about how Jesus changed the Ephesians’ life. What is the most important idea that Paul wants his readers to understand from their personal experience with Jesus?



Paul uses a special word picture to help us understand how God changes us. This word picture is changing our clothes.

For Paul, the life of faith is about our having a real and personal connection with Jesus. We don’t only learn about Him; we know Him. We believe that Jesus woke up from the dead and is alive. We believe He lives in our hearts. We accept His teachings. The example of His life changes us. We become loyal to Jesus as our living Lord. We obey Him. We allow the Holy Spirit and the Bible to lead us.

Paul tells us what we must do if we want Jesus to control our lives and to lead us:

1. We must reject our old way of life (Ephesians 4:22).
2. We must let God give us new hearts and minds (Ephesians 4:23).
3. We must live holy lives (Ephesians 4:24).

Paul uses a special word picture to help us understand how God changes us. This word picture is changing our clothes. In the Old Testament, clothes were a word picture for bad behavior (Psalm 73:6; Zechariah 3:3, 4; Malachi 2:16, ICB, NKJV). Clothes were also a word picture for God’s saving mercy (Isaiah 61:10; Ezekiel 16:8; Zechariah 3:4, 5).

In Bible times, men wore a long shirt known as a tunic. The tunic was knee-length. A man wore the tunic as an undershirt. Then he wore a coat or robe on top of the tunic to protect him from the sun. Women, also, wore tunics and robes. In Bible times, people didn’t have a lot of clothes. Clothes were expensive. People took good care of their clothes. They kept their clothes for a long time. So, when someone changed his clothes and put on new clothes, this change was important. Everyone around him noticed when he changed his clothes. Paul says that becoming a Christian is the same. Jesus changes your life so much that it is the same as a person putting on brand-new clothes for everyone to see.

**You can learn ABOUT Jesus or learn to KNOW Him. How are these two things different? Which one do you think is better to do? Why?**

## JESUS AND OUR WORDS (Ephesians 4:25–29)

**What advice does Paul give us about the words we say? Read Ephesians 4:25–29 for the answer. Which one of Paul’s rules about our words is the most important to you right now?**

Paul’s advice to Christians teaches them what to say and how to say it. Christians must tell the truth. They must not lie about anything. They also must share Bible truth. Does this mean that it’s okay for Christians to be mean and nasty because they are honest? Of course not! We must have love in our hearts, when we share the truth with people. Paul tells us that our words should bring peace in the church (read Zechariah 8:16).

In Ephesians 4:31, Paul says we shouldn’t get mad when we talk to people or say angry words. So, Paul isn’t giving us permission, in Ephesians 4:26, to get angry at church members. Yes, Paul understands that we will feel angry about things sometimes. But we need to be careful about what we say. We must not let the anger we feel become angry words we say that hurt people.

In the middle of his advice about the words we say, Paul switches his topic to stealing. He says, “Whoever has been stealing must stop it and start working. They must use their hands for doing something good. Then they will have something to share with those who are poor” (Ephesians 4:28, ERV; also, read 1 Corinthians 4:12; 1 Thessalonians 4:11). Why does Paul include this advice about thieves? Maybe Paul wants us to understand the connection between stealing and lying words. We see this connection in the story about Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11). Paul’s faith in Jesus is so strong that he believes God can change selfish hearts to caring hearts. God can turn thieves into givers!

Then Paul says, “Don’t let any evil talk come out of your mouths. Say only what will help to build others up and meet their needs. Then what you say will help those who listen” (Ephesians 4:29, NIV). Paul wants us to do more than stop our evil talk. Paul wants us to replace evil words with good words. Notice that Paul explains what our good words must do. Our words must do three things: (1) Our words must help people feel stronger and better. (2) We must say what people need to hear, and not what they want to hear. (3) Our words must improve people’s lives.



**Paul tells us that our words should bring peace in the church (read Zechariah 8:16).**

## THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE (Ephesians 4:30)



**When we say mean and nasty things about each other, we hurt people with our words.**

**As we saw yesterday, Paul warns Christians to be careful about what they say and how they say it. In his message, what does Paul say about the Holy Spirit? Read Ephesians 4:30 for the answer.**

Paul offers us a warning and a promise at the same time. Our sins against each other in the church aren't small in God's eyes. God gave us the gift of speech. When we say mean and nasty things to other church members, we hurt the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:25–27, 29, 31, 32). Paul's warning in these verses is much the same as Isaiah's warning in Isaiah 63:10. Isaiah warns, "But they turned against the Lord. They made his Holy Spirit very sad. So the Lord became their enemy. And he fought against them" (Isaiah 63:10, ICB).

Paul tells Christians that the Holy Spirit marks them with a special mark. This mark shows that they belong to God (Ephesians 1:13, 14). The mark also is proof that the Holy Spirit will keep Christians safe until God makes them free at the Second Coming (Ephesians 4:30). So, we must respect the Holy Spirit. When we say mean and nasty things about each other, we hurt people with our words. We show that we don't respect the Holy Spirit. We make the Holy Spirit sad.

Paul wants us to understand another Bible truth about the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is a Person. The Spirit has feelings. That is why the Spirit feels sad when we say mean things to each other. (Read more about how the Spirit behaves as a Person: Romans 8:16, 26, 27; 1 Corinthians 2:10, 13; 1 Corinthians 12:11; Galatians 5:17, 18.)

We must be careful when we talk about the Three-in-One God. The Three-in-One God is a mystery. The Spirit is One with the Father or in agreement with Him. At the same time, the Spirit is a separate Person from the Father and from the Son. "The Spirit has His own mind. He makes His own choices. We can make the Spirit sad when we do and say bad things. Only a person can be made sad or hurt. At the same time, the Spirit is not the same as we are. When we say that the Spirit is a Person, we are using human words to try to understand God. No human can be the same as the Holy Spirit. He is above us because He is God."—Paul Petersen, *God in 3 Persons—In the New Testament* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2015), page 20, adapted.

**BEING LOVING (NOT MAD) (Ephesians 4:31, 32)**

Jesus is coming back soon. What should we stop doing so that we can be ready? What feelings and behaviors do we need to let go of? What words do we need to stop saying? At the same time, what feelings and behaviors should we have? Read Ephesians 4:31, 32 for the answers.

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In Ephesians 4:17–32, Paul tells us about six things we must not do (read Ephesians 4:31). Paul also commands us to be loving and forgiving (Ephesians 4:32). Then Paul tells us the reason why we must forgive. We must forgive each other because God forgives us. God forgives us because of everything Jesus did for us (Ephesians 4:32). Paul says, “Never be bitter, angry, or mad. Never shout angrily or say things to hurt others. Never do anything evil” (Ephesians 4:31, ERV).

Look at Paul’s list again in Ephesians 4:17–32. Do you see how our angry feelings cause us to say angry words? Paul wants us to stop using words as if they were weapons. Christians must remove from their hearts the bad feelings that cause angry words. Then the Christian community will grow. There will be peace and agreement in the church (compare Ephesians 4:1–16).

Remember, we don’t get rid of angry words and feelings by acting as if those feelings aren’t there. We must let God remove our angry feelings and angry words. Then we must let Jesus fill our hearts with loving feelings. We must ask Him to help us to say only loving words. We must not let anger control what we say or do. We must let God’s love and forgiveness change our hearts and feelings. God gives us His forgiveness because of Jesus (Ephesians 4:32). So, the forgiveness that God offers us is the reason that we must forgive each other (compare Colossians 3:13; Matthew 6:12, 14, 15).

**Think about your words and how they make people feel. What can you say to help people feel hope? How can your words help people to feel encouraged? How can your words help them to feel strong in their faith in God?**



**We must let God remove our angry feelings and angry words.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** “Don’t say anything that you will need to say you are sorry for later. ‘And do not make the Holy Spirit sad. The Spirit is God’s proof that you belong to him. God gave you the Spirit to show that God will make you free when the time comes’ [Ephesians 4:30, ICB]. . . . When you have love in your heart, you will help your brother in Christ [Jesus] grow stronger in his faith. If someone says something mean or nasty about your friend or brother in Christ, don’t encourage these evil words. Be nice. Tell the person who is talking to you that the Bible forbids us to talk that way.”—Ellen G. White, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, June 5, 1888, adapted.



**When you have love in your heart, you will help your brother in Christ [Jesus] grow stronger in his faith.**

How would the members in your local church change if everyone said and kept the promises below?

1. I want to encourage my church family to grow strong in faith (Ephesians 4:29).
2. I will do and say things that I believe are good. I will not talk about the mistakes that people have made, even if I believe these people are wrong (John 13:34, 35; John 17:20–23; Ephesians 4:1–6; 1 Thessalonians 5:9–11).
3. When I don’t agree with someone, I will show this person respect. I will believe that this person loves God. I will share my view in a loving way. I will not get angry or be mean (Ephesians 4:31, 32).
4. I will have a joyful heart while I wait for Jesus to come back. I will look for ways that I can help church members to become the best that they can be (Ephesians 4:29, 30; Galatians 6:2; Hebrews 10:24, 25).

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

① In the book of Ephesians, Paul talks 11 times about how God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit work together to save humans. Read all 11 messages: Ephesians 1:3–14; Ephesians 1:15–23; Ephesians 2:11–18; Ephesians 2:19–22; Ephesians 3:1–13; Ephesians 3:14–19; Ephesians 4:4–6; Ephesians 4:17–24; Ephesians 4:25–32; Ephesians 5:15–20; Ephesians 6:10–20 (in Ephesians 6:10, the words “the Lord” mean Jesus).

② Today, many of us communicate with people on Facebook or on the computer. In Ephesians 4:25–32, we can read Paul’s advice about communication. How should we communicate online?

## PART 5: HEALED BY GOD

**A**lmira told her parents about her decision to become a Seventh-day Adventist. Almira also told them about taking classes on spirits and magic. Almira told her parents about the evil spirit that visited her and about her bad dreams, too.

Mother cried. She told Almira, “If the church helps you, go.”

After Almira was baptized, she was never bothered by the evil spirit again.

Today, Almira H. Yalysheva, 46, is a language teacher at Zaoksky Adventist University in Russia. Her husband is Kemil K. Yalyshev. Almira met and married Kemil while studying at Zaoksky in the late 1990s. Kemil is a pastor and the vice president for student life at the university. Before Almira and Kemil worked at the university, they served for 10 years as Bible workers to non-Christian people in Russia’s North Caucasus area. Not long ago, the couple studied at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIAS) in the Philippines.

Almira also is a mother. She has a rule at home. She doesn’t allow her children to watch any cartoons or read any books that talk about magic. After Almira’s own experience with evil spirits, she believes that the idea that there is good magic and bad magic is a lie. Almira says that all magic opens the door to Satan and his evil angels. Sometimes a parent will ask Almira, “What will my children talk about with their friends if they don’t watch cartoons?” Almira tells them that there are more interesting things to watch and talk about. If people choose to own screens or TVs in their homes, there are shows they can watch about animals and nature.

Almira’s sister, Faniya, is also an Adventist. Their father worshiped with them on Sabbath before He died. Their mother, now 75, reads the Bible and Ellen G. White’s writings. After Almira got baptized, she brought health magazines home from church. Mother read them. Slowly, Mother changed her lifestyle. She stopped drinking black tea and replaced it with fresh water. Mother also started to exercise. Soon her headaches went away. Almira’s wish to help her mother feel better was the reason Almira started studying about magic and spirits. But now God healed Mother. Almira says, “The decision to give myself to Jesus changed my life. Now I have the honor of being Jesus’ hands and feet. My biggest wish is to serve Him.”

This story shows Church Growth Task #2 of the “I Will Go” Plan for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Church Growth Task #2 is: “We will help the Adventist Church grow strong in new ways in large cities. We will share Jesus with people who do not know Him in North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.” Learn more at [IWillGo2020.org](http://IWillGo2020.org).

## INSIDE Story

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



**Almira says that all magic opens the door to Satan and his evil angels.**

