

The title 'FLIP THE SWITCH' is rendered in a bold, yellow, sans-serif font. The word 'FLIP' is on the top line, 'SWITCH' is on the bottom line, and 'THE' is in white with a black outline on the top line. A central illustration of a light switch with a red knob and a black handle is positioned between 'FLIP' and 'SWITCH'. The word 'OFF' is printed below the switch handle. Above the switch are three white lightning bolts and three asterisks. White decorative swirls and dots are scattered around the text.

FLIP THE SWITCH

A Southeast Sermon Series

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

SWITCH YOUR THINKING

EPHESIANS 4:1-24

If you've been studying with us through Ephesians 1-3, we hope that you have begun to understand and rest in your identity in Christ and the purpose for which God created you. If you are just joining, welcome! Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus is a beautiful tribute to God's power, grace, and mercy and WHO WE ARE because of WHAT GOD has done for us.

In Ephesians 4-6, Paul builds on this teaching and directs us to *flip the switch* on our thinking and behaviors. Chapters 4-6 will help us to understand how we can take the truths of Chapters 1-3 and use them to grow into maturity.

Recall that as a letter to the early church, Ephesians would have been read aloud in the local church(es) by a messenger or the local leaders.

Generally, do you think that reading aloud (or saying something out loud) carries more or less impact than simply reading a passage quietly? Why or why not?

Literacy rates were low in the 1st Century and only the very wealthy could afford written materials, so information came through the spoken word. Additionally, the New Testament as we know it was not yet written in the 1st Century! Letters were crucial resources to help the Church understand this new Way called Christianity. Churches would return to letters like this one from the Apostles over and over again to remind themselves of the teaching and messages within.

Open your Bibles to Ephesians Chapter 4.

Our passage this week is lengthy, but worth the time to read aloud—Ephesians 4:1-24. As you read, take note in the space below of the themes and phrases you hear repeated throughout.

What word in verse 1 points us to the themes and truths Paul taught in chapters 1-3?

The conjunction *then*, or *therefore*, depending on your preferred translation, points us both **backwards and forwards**. **Back** to the truths we learned about WHO WE ARE because of WHAT GOD has done for us: we are blessed, chosen, holy and blameless, adopted, unified, forgiven, sealed, and redeemed. **Forward** to WHAT WE ARE TO DO as a result of Christ's saving work.

To paraphrase verse 4:1: We are God's chosen; **therefore**, we must walk worthy of this gift. Not out of obligation, but out of gratitude for what Christ has given us.

In verses 2-6 Paul gives us some examples of what it means to *live a life worthy of the calling*. Note some of these examples in the space below.

Are any of these harder for you than others? In what way?

Notice that Paul focuses more here on interactions with those around us, rather than inward-facing characteristics. Why is it so important for us as Christians to treat others well?

As we seek to *live a life worthy*, we should be comforted to know that Christ gives us what we need. Find some of the tools Paul tells us we have been given in verses 7-13 and list them below.

First and foremost, Christ gave us a living, breathing example of how to *live a life worthy* when He walked on the earth. If we, as well as all leaders of our Church (apostles, prophets, teachers), strive to live as Jesus did and walk as Jesus walked, we will no doubt see the fruit of our endeavors.

What is the metaphor Paul uses in verses 14 and 15?

Can you relate to Paul's metaphor in verses 14 and 15? How have you experienced this in your own faith journey?

Fill in the missing words from verse 17:

So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must _____ as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their _____.

Not all of Paul's audience across Ephesus would have been Gentile converts to Christianity, but he uses this to make a pointed *contrast* between a life **worthy** and one that is **unworthy**— between the before way of thinking and our new way of thinking as Christians.

Complete the list below of the results of the futile thinking of the Gentiles from verses 18 and 19.

They are:

Ignorant _____ Separated from God

Lost compassion/feeling _____ Only concerned with their own pleasure

Living and thinking in the ways of the Gentiles (unbelievers) is futile. Pointless. Useless. Ineffective. Incapable of producing any result.

Have you experienced futile thinking? Did you realize it was futile at the time?

However, *that is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ.*

However (verse 19) is another one of those conjunctions (just like *then/therefore* from verse 4:1) that sets up the contrast of our lives as unbelievers versus our lives as Christ followers. This is the **SWITCH** that is flipped when we follow Christ. We no longer follow the old way of living; **instead**, there is a new way of thinking and living.

Can you think of a time in your life where your identity changed in some way, perhaps the change from child to adult, single to married, student to professional? What are some of the specific ways **your life reflected that change?**

Fill in the blanks from verses 22-24 below:

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to _____ your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to _____ the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Discuss what Paul could mean here when he says *put off* the old self and *put on* the new self to *be made new in the attitude of your minds*.

As our identity changes, we should have both inward and outward transformation. Have you seen or experienced personally the tendency to focus only on the outward changes, those visible to others? Why do you think this is?

Why do you think it is important in our personal faith journey to focus on **BOTH** the inward changes, such as how we think and process things, **AND** the outward ways in which we behave and treat others?

If we are to no longer follow our old way of living, what must we shed/leave behind?

If we are to truly flip the switch, **every aspect of our lives will be transformed**. Our thinking, our language, our way of living, what we accept in the world, our perspective, and our resiliency. Every bit of it.

Sound daunting?

The really fantastic news about what Paul tells us in this passage is that we don't have to do this all on our own. We are given help.

Take turns reading these verses.

John 14:16: "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever..."

John 14:26: "But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."

Luke 11:13: "If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Romans 5:5: “And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.”

Acts 1:8: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Ezekiel 36:27: “And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”

Who/What is the help that we are given? Do you rely on the Holy Spirit as these verses would suggest you can (and should)? Explain your response.

Author James K.A. Smith in his book, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*, helps us to understand that while our calling and adoption is complete, the transformation of our whole selves will take time: “The orientation of the heart happens from the bottom up, through the formation of our habits of desire. Learning to love (God) takes practice.”

GROUP CHALLENGE:

Assign prayer partners within your group. Have them exchange their contact info and ask them to commit to checking in and praying for their partner at least once per week. Make sure everyone has a partner.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE:

How will you *practice putting off your old way of thinking*? What will you do to *switch your thinking* this week? Write yourself a challenge in the space below.

MEMORY VERSE:

It will be a few more weeks before we get to this verse in our study, but let’s get to work memorizing a very important verse:

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Ephesians 5:8-10



As you'll recall, there are many types of learners, so we'll try to get the most common learning styles engaged as we go along to help us. This week, for our visual learners, let's draw a picture that reminds us of the verses, either incorporating the verses themselves into the picture or simply a picture that reminds you of them.

SWITCH YOUR FLIP

EPHESIANS 4:25-31

Last week, we learned that as those chosen in Christ we are called to a different way of thinking, we are called to *Flip the Switch* and *Switch Our Thinking*. This week we will *Switch the Flip* and continue our exploration into how we are to live as believers with a specific focus on our language and actions.

Read verses 25-31 aloud.

After reading these verses, complete the list below of behavior Paul calls us to:

- Put off _____ . (v25)
- Do not allow anger to cause you to _____ . (v26)
- Do not hold on to _____ . (v26)
- Do not _____ . (v28)
- _____ with those in need. (v28)
- Do not use _____ talk. (v29)
- _____ others up. (v29)
- Purge bad attitudes, get rid of _____ , _____ , _____ , _____ , _____ . (v31)

Of the list above, circle the one or two (or three) you struggle with the most. Why do you think these particular areas are difficult for you?

Do you think this is an exhaustive list of everything we must do to *become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is Christ (4:15)*?

Why do you think Paul begins with these particular areas?

What are some examples of *speaking truth* (v25)? How do we balance God's call for truth with God's equal call for grace?

What do you think it means that we are *all members of one body* (v25)?

Why is it important to protect the whole body?

Does Paul say that anger alone is a sin? Why is this an important distinction?

How then do we manage our anger?

How can anger *give the devil a foothold* (v27)?

Of course, we know by now that stealing is wrong. But **why** is stealing wrong?

Paul seems to suggest a purpose for **working** in verse 28. What is it?

Could Paul be saying that not sharing with *those in need* is stealing?

Words have the power to heal us and the power to wound us. A favorite example of this from time spent in Children's Ministry uses a tube of toothpaste to illustrate that once the toothpaste is squeezed out, it can't be put back into the tube. Just like words once spoken can't ever be unspoken.

Can you think of a time in your life where the words of others have wounded you? Have you asked God to begin to heal the damage in your heart? Or are you holding on to anger or bitterness?

Can you think of a time in your life where the words of others have *built you up*? How did that experience change you?

Discuss what Paul might mean by the phrase *do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God* (v30).

Anyone else read verse 30 with a parental voice in your head saying: "I'm not mad, just disappointed"? Just as our parents were grieved when we knew the right thing to do but did the wrong thing anyway, the Holy Spirit can be grieved by our actions.

Can you grieve for something/someone with whom you have no relationship?

There are many emotions we can have toward strangers, but, in general, grief is not one of them. Not only does the Holy Spirit grieve for the pain sin will cause YOU, but He also grieves for the pain YOUR sin will cause OTHERS.

Recall: *We are all members of _____ body* (v25).

Where else in Ephesians can we find the language *sealed* that Paul uses in verse 30?

Ephesians 1:13-14 reads: “...When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.”

What does it mean to make a deposit?

In the financial world, a deposit, or a down payment, is the assurance that you are committed to paying back the rest of what is owed to completion.

The deposit was made for us so that we are equipped to bring glory to God. We can’t ever truly pay the rest of our debt, but God has given us the Holy Spirit to work toward living a life that is holy and pleasing to God.

Verse 31 specifically calls out six areas Christians are to *put off* or *get rid of*. Briefly discuss and define each, noting where they are similar and different:

- Bitterness _____
- Rage _____
- Anger _____
- Brawling _____
- Slander _____
- Every form of malice _____

How does *switching your thinking* help you to **switch your flip** (language)?

GROUP CHALLENGE:

Split into groups of 2-3. Pray specifically over one another that the wounds made by words (old or new) would be healed.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE:

What are two opportunities you will seize this week to build up the body of Christ with your words? Write them in the space below and hold yourself accountable for following through.

1.

2.

MEMORY VERSE:

Words this week—say it out loud! Are you making progress in memorizing Ephesians 5:8-10? This week let's give our auditory and verbal learners an opportunity to learn. Either read the verse aloud 3-4 times OR sing the verse to the tune of a favorite song (like an old nursery rhyme! *Are you sleeping?* works great with this one.). Try singing it (in your head if you want!) a few times over the next week and committing it to memory.

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Ephesians 5:8-10

SWITCH YOUR STANDARDS

EPHESIANS 4:32-5:14

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Ephesians 5:8-10

Take a moment (don't rush and skip this!) to write the memory verse in the space below.

As a market researcher for a Fortune 500 company, any data or number you come across regarding consumer interest or purchasing intent is meaningless in isolation. It is only when compared with a benchmark or a standard that there is any meaning. Fifty percent of the people you survey say they would buy your product. Sounds OK, maybe even good, right? Unless you also know that every time people are surveyed, a minimum of 55% say they want to buy any product presented!

Whether we realize it or not, there are standards, benchmarks that we hold ourselves to in every area of our lives. The question for us is: what are our standards to **be** once we have *flipped the switch* and are Christians?

In general, what is the **standard that culture uses** to define acceptable behavior? IS there a standard?

Read Romans 3:22-23 aloud.

We **all** *fall short of the glory of God.* God is our gold standard.

Although it's important to remember that we are all made in the image of God, we are not God.

But Christ is.

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word **was** God. He was in the beginning with God."* John 1:1-2

Read Ephesians 4:32-5:2

Christ is who we are to follow/imitate/model our lives after. How did Jesus live when He walked on the earth? Discuss some stories that come to mind about how Jesus interacted with others.

How would you describe **who** God is and the **characteristics** of God?

What characteristics do we **share with God**?

What characteristics do **we share with Christ**, who is now and forever fully God and fully human?

What does Ephesians 5:1-2 tell us about how we can be like God and Christ?

Not only are we created in God's image and armed with the knowledge of how Christ lived as our model, but we also have the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In *Week One: Switch Your Thinking*, we explored some of what it means to have the gift of the Holy Spirit. What are some of the things you recall that the Holy Spirit does for us?

Read 2 Peter 1:3-4 aloud.

How much of what we need for a *godly life* have we been given?

Nothing *A little* *A lot* *Everything*

We have been given everything we need and are *partakers of God's divine nature!*

While we are not and never will be God, we are partakers of God's divine nature with an example (Christ) and a helper (Holy Spirit) to use in order to switch our standards so that we align more closely with God.

Read verses 3-14 aloud.

What are the behaviors and associations Paul says we are to *put off* in verses 3-7?

As we have gone through these behaviors to *put off* and *put on* in chapters 4 and 5, what emotions have you experienced?

Why is it important to recognize the emotions we experience as we read through God's Word?

Being honest with ourselves about the emotions we feel when confronted with lists like these is an important step in understanding the **motivation** behind our actions. Are we annoyed and put off by the calling out of a sin because we feel personally challenged? Are we fearful and anxious because we would rather be liked than change our standards and behaviors?

Is this list exhaustive of all the behaviors we are to avoid as Christians? How do we know?

Choose 2-3 behaviors from verses 3-7 and discuss how each one can affect more than the person doing the behavior. For example, greed takes from others who may need it and puts our desires on things rather than God.

Does it matter to God how we treat His creation (i.e., people, ourselves)? Why?

There are likely infinite ways that we sin and separate ourselves from God. Paul gives us a *starting list and some principles* to use as we mature in our walk to help us *switch your standard* and build a life that honors God's creations and brings us closer to God.

In verses 8-14, Paul explores the idea of *light versus darkness*. What do you think he means in verse 8 by "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light"?

Can you personally relate to Paul's statement that *you were once darkness*?

Why do you think Paul needs to tell us that we should *live as children of the light*?

Explore what is meant in verse 12 that it is "*shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret*"?

Without the same standards, what is done in secret by the unbelieving is even worse than can be imagined. Paul does not suggest that we ignore the sins, but how could **talking in detail** about these secret sins not honor God?

What can we do in our everyday lives to align our standards with God's? What are some practical ways to make sure the standards we are using are God honoring?

We have covered a lot of theological ground already in Ephesians. Thinking back to what we have learned so far, explore the meaning behind what Paul quotes in verse 14:

*Wake up sleeper,
Rise from the dead,*

And Christ will shine on you.

Who is sleeping? Who are the dead? What does it mean for Christ to shine on you?

How do these verses comfort you?

GROUP CHALLENGE:

Ask someone to read the memory verse aloud as a prayer to close.

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord.

Ephesians 5:8-10

PERSONAL CHALLENGE:

This week, evaluate key areas of your life and the standards you are holding yourself to. Where do you feel confident about your standards? Where might you not be honoring God?

SWITCH YOUR PERSPECTIVE

EPHESIANS 5:15-20

Our perspective can change everything. This week we explore the unique perspective believers should have on the inevitable challenges and opportunities that come their way.

Man A suffers damage to his house from a devastating tornado. His family is safe, and he is thankful. But the work required to rebuild is daunting and their lives were already hectic before this mess. Bitterness turns into anger and frustration as he slogs through the hassle of rebuilding.

Man B suffers the same damage. It is a hassle to rebuild, but he chooses to use the opportunity to share the story of how God protected their family from harm and to show love and share the Word of God to the contractors.

Discuss the impacts of the different perspectives of Man A versus Man B.

Be honest—Who do you think you are like more often: Man A or B? What keeps you from being more like Man B?

Share a time when your negative outlook or perspective on something held you back. What did you learn from that experience?

Switching your perspective sounds easy enough on paper, but in real life we might need a bit of help.

God has provided exactly what we need: Read **Ephesians 5:15-20 aloud**.

What is the difference between living wisely and living foolishly? Look up each verse below and fill in the missing blanks

Proverbs 12:15: *The way of fools seems right _____, but the wise listen to advice.*

Proverbs 14:16: *The wise _____ the Lord and _____ evil, but a fool is _____ and yet feels _____.*

Proverbs 18:2-3: *Fools find no pleasure in _____, but delight in airing _____ opinions.*

Summarize what **foolish living** looks like based on these verses.

Look again at the verses above and **circle** what a wise man does.

Summarize what **wise living** looks like based on these verses.

A wise person will *understand what the Lord's will is* and will *make the most of every opportunity*.

Do you believe it is God's will for us to simply **survive** challenges and opportunities or to **thrive** through them?

What do we miss when we are only trying to survive?

In verse 18, why do you think Paul makes this particular comparison? Being *drunk on wine* versus being *filled with the Spirit*?

What might someone be seeking in alcohol?

Other than alcohol, what else could we do/others use to try to accomplish the same outcome?

While drinking excessively or another crutch may temporarily numb our pain or help us to forget the challenges in our lives, Paul wants us to see that we have a gift in the Spirit that can heal us and do so much more.

In *Week One: Switch Your Thinking*, we explored the Holy Spirit a bit. What do you recall about the Holy Spirit from your discussion (it's OK to flip back and re-read the verses from Week 1).

Read Galatians 5:22-25. What does the Spirit give us?

Complete Column B in the chart below with the **opposite** of the fruits of the Spirit in Column A.

A	B
Love	
Joy	
Peace	
Patience	
Kindness	
Goodness	
Faithfulness	
Gentleness	
Self-Control	

Are you living more in Column A than Column B?

Looking back only on the last week, have **you tried to lead the work** to control the path to peace, patience, kindness, contentment, etc. **more or less often than you let the Holy Spirit lead the work?** Why do you think that is?

In verses 19 and 20, what are the three **effects** of being filled with the Spirit? (Paul gives a fourth in verse 21, but we'll get to that next week.)

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Why do you think Paul mentions these particular effects of being filled with the Spirit? Do you think that they help accomplish anything? If so, what?

As believers, we want to see these days as opportunities and live wisely in them rather than just trying to survive through them. Our perspective is not helplessness or apathy, but confidence that comes from actively living by the power of the Spirit.

GROUP CHALLENGE:

Set a timer for five minutes and write down as many things you can think of that you are grateful for. Share a few with the group and pray as a group over your blessings.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE:

Evaluate the areas in your life where you are struggling to keep your perspective and live by the Holy Spirit. Ask yourself "why?" And then "why?" again. Are you always angry in the car? Why? Because you are always rushed? Why are you always rushed? Is it because you don't leave yourself enough time or because your plate is too full? Try to get below the surface to the root and ask for the Holy Spirit's help in switching your perspective or guiding you toward action.

MEMORY VERSE:

Do you have this one memorized? Not quite? Use your fingers to trace the words as you say them to yourself.

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