



SEQUIM COMMUNITY CHURCH

EPHESIANS

SESSION 8A: THE PROCESS OF LETTING GO

Ephesians 4:17-32

"Exploring the new standards and new relationships God intends for us"

By Rev. Rick Dietzman, Minister of Adult Discipleship

Ice Breaker

1. Share about something that you let go of from the past. For example, an old habit you broke, or a bad attitude you had. _____

The first part of this passage talks about Paul's insistence that believers change their habits when it comes to futile thoughts and sensuality.

"So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 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; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." -- Ephesians 4:17-24

One of the best ways to discern an attitude change is to look at our actual behavior. In 2001 the Christian researcher George Barna did an extensive survey* in the US to see the differences between churched and unchurched adults. He found that churched adults were more likely than unchurched individuals to choose not to watch a particular movie or video only because the rating indicated that it contained objectionable material (22% compared to 7%, respectively) and to turn off a television program they were watching because they did not like the values or viewpoint presented in the program (47% compared to 34%). Unchurched adults were more likely to have viewed "adult-only" content on the Internet (19% versus 8% among the churched). But there was no difference in relation to reading a magazine or watching a movie or video that contained explicit sexual images. About one out of every five adults had done so in the past seven days. Another survey, reported in Christianity Today in 2005, gave similar results. The religious and the nonreligious are nearly

indistinguishable in their attitudes about their own individual movie going experience when it comes to watching R-rated films (an average of 29% watch them). Interestingly, the same study noted that self-described "conservative" religious people are much more likely to watch violent R-rated movies than "liberal" religious folk.

2. What do these results tell you about how seriously Christians are taking Paul's admonition when it comes to what we feed our minds? _____

PRACTICAL HELP: An overwhelming majority of Christians express concern about the sexual and violent content of today's movies, and yet our viewing patterns are essentially the same as everyone else. The obvious solution is to remind ourselves to be selective, but of course the movie industry is not helping much in terms of self regulation. One very proactive thing you can do is to commit to removing profanity and excessive violence from your home and purchase a special DVD player that lets you selectively skip over swearing, violence or nudity from any current movie that you rent or own. You can see the demo and purchase one at www.clearplay.com. I've had one of these players for about a year, and it works very well, making movies more enjoyable to watch without a lot of the junk.

3. Paul says the Gentiles (non-Jews) are affected with a spiritual condition known as hardness of heart (verse 4:18). What are the effects of this condition? _____

4. What kind of behavior or attitudes might indicate movement toward a hard heart? _____

Deceitful desires corrupt our lives, but God has something better for us. He wants to give each of us a new attitude and a new lifestyle as a member of the body of Christ.

The point of the next section is to reject what destroys relationships and promote what builds relationships. It is a way to picture the significance of putting off the old self and putting on the new self which is "created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."

Praying for one another:

This session dealt with the old and new self and addressed the struggles we face in putting the past behind us and living out the new life. Is there anything in your life that is causing you to have a hard heart right now? Are you struggling with anger toward anyone? What specifically could you do this week to make the Holy Spirit very happy (versus causing Him grief!) in terms of your relationships with others? Take time now to pray for each other.

**The study, co-sponsored by Variety and MarketCast, was commissioned to get a better feel for the public debate about the effect of movies on our nation's moral climate. They wanted to find out whether religious conservatives, typically the most vocal group when it comes to Hollywood's "value system," were putting their money where their mouth is. More specifically, were religious conservatives griping about hyper-violent and sexual R-rated movies ... but going to see them anyway?*

Seems the answer to that question is yes. Not necessarily a resounding yes, but according to the story, "the religious and the nonreligious ... were nearly indistinguishable in their attitudes about their own individual movie-going experience."

Some of the specific findings:

- 25 percent of the "very religious" have seen movies rated R for their sexual content, compared to 33 percent of the "nonreligious"
- 19 percent of the "very religious" have seen movies rated R for their violent content, compared to 28 percent of the "nonreligious"

Another interesting statistic comes from within the subcategory of the "religious," regarding their viewing of violent R-rated films. Of the "religious" folk, 29 percent of those calling themselves "conservative" have seen the violent R movies, compared to only 19 percent of the "liberal" ones. So, conservatives seem to be more into violence than liberals.