

CHRISTIAN 24/7

Bruce Mullan

STUFF YOU WILL NEED

- pencils
- paper
- tape
- a trash can
- markers
- two large sheets of paper
- a copy of *The Message* version of the Bible

CHECKING IN

Before you meet together, take a few minutes to be still and to pray.

Open the session by presenting this case study: *“You are staying at a friend’s place while their parents are away for the weekend. On Saturday night, you and your friend go to an all-night party and do things you don’t feel right about. The next day, your parents ask what you did last night.”*

What would you tell them?

Would you be completely truthful? Why? Why not?

EXPLORING THE WORD

Scripture: Ephesians 4:22–3 (from *The Message*)

Read aloud Ephesians 4:22–32. Then read the following information or explain it in your own words:

The Ephesians were not Jewish converts who knew a lot about God’s expectations for behavior; not long ago, they had been pagans. Paul tells the Christians in Ephesus that they are to live in ways that differ from the culture around them. He tells them that they can’t be Christians and continue to behave as they did before. If they want to be Christians, they have to act consistently—in a new, Christ-like way.

The scripture calls us to live as Christians 24/7. Like the Ephesians before us, we can't be Christians and continue to behave as if we were not. That would be like trying to drive a car east and west at the same time.

Paul is calling for a radical transformation in Christ. Verse 22 in *The Message* sums it up: "Everything—and I do mean everything—connected with that old way of life has to go. It's rotten through and through. Get rid of it!" On the other hand, our new life should reflect the love and goodness of God.

A story tells about a young boy who traveled through Europe with his parents, visiting all the great cathedrals of the past. Back in Sunday school after he returned, his teacher asked, "What is a saint?" Remembering the magnificent stained glass windows in the cathedrals, the boy answered, "A saint is someone God shines light through."

Post two large sheets of paper on the wall, one labeled "Old Self" and one labeled "New Self." Invite people to think about the scripture and to list on these sheets some undesirable "old self" behaviors, such as lying, anger, bad language, and some desirable "new self" behaviors, such as truthfulness, honesty, kindness. Then discuss the following questions.

Which of the "new self" behaviors is most important to you? Why?

Which of the "old self" behaviors is most difficult to put away? Why?

How can Christians reconcile the fact that their behavior is sometimes an expression of their "old self" and sometimes an expression of their "new self"?

Which of the "new self" behaviors will you work on in the week ahead?

SHARING IN PRAYER

Distribute paper and pens. Invite people to list "old self" behaviors that they see in themselves. Suggest that they begin with behaviors listed in the scripture and add other behaviors as necessary.

Read aloud Ephesians 4:22 from *The Message*. Then invite people, one at a time, to crumple up their lists and to toss them in the trash can.

When everyone has finished, conclude the session with these words of forgiveness from 1 John 1:9 (NRSV): "If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

TAKING IT FURTHER

The next time you meet, remind the group that the trash has been taken away and their lists of failures are gone, just as God has forgiven their sins and set them free.