

BIBLE STUDY:

# EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE BODY

It would be great if we could leave our imperfect churches  
and go back to the New Testament church . . . wouldn't it?

This Bible study originally appeared as part of a *Discipleship Journal* special section titled  
"Better Together: Why the Body of Christ Matters" (Mar/Apr 2004, Issue 140).

1. Read Eph. 1:1-2. Who is Paul writing to? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Read Eph. 4:1-5:21. In the first column below, write all the attitudes and actions Paul tells this church to stay away from, to put off, or to stop. In the second, write the positive characteristics he says to adopt.

PUT OFF

PUT ON

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
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_____	_____
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3. Why would a New Testament church need such admonitions? Let's take a look at what was happening with believers at that time. As you read the following passages, summarize the situation and any related warnings or commendations.

Acts 4:32-37 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 6:1-6 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 15:36-40 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Cor. 5:1-2 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Cor. 6:7-8 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Cor. 11:17-22 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Cor. 16:15-18 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Cor. 9:1-2 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Cor. 12:21 \_\_\_\_\_

Gal. 2:11-14 \_\_\_\_\_

Eph. 1:15-16 \_\_\_\_\_

Phil. 4:2-3 \_\_\_\_\_

Phil. 4:14-19 \_\_\_\_\_

Col. 4:12-13 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Thess. 3:11 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Tim. 1:3-7 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Tim. 4:16 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Tim. 4:9-10 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Tim. 6:10 \_\_\_\_\_

Titus. 1:10-14 \_\_\_\_\_

Phlm. 4-7 \_\_\_\_\_

3 Jn. 3-4 \_\_\_\_\_

3 Jn. 9-10 \_\_\_\_\_

4. Review your list of situations. In what ways are they consistent with, or different from, how you've viewed the early church?

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5. Go back and put a minus sign (-) next to the situations that clearly show the characteristics from the "Put Off" list and a plus sign (+) next to those that demonstrate the "Put On" list.

## LIFE TODAY

6. The New Testament churches were not all that different from our own. For most of us, our experience of life in the body has been like Paul's: a combination of positive and negative.

As you were making your Ephesians lists and eavesdropping on the behavior and attitudes in the early churches, did some of your own church experiences (positive, negative, or mixed) come to mind? If so, describe one. \_\_\_\_\_

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7. Which Ephesians list ("Put On" or "Put Off") was dominant in that experience? Circle any words from your lists that describe the dynamics that were in operation at the time. \_\_\_\_\_

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8. If your experience was negative, how might some of the Christlike qualities from the "Put On" list have changed the situation?

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9. Paul summed up the "Put On" actions and attitudes in Eph. 5:21 as "submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ." As you look at the actions you circled in question 7, how do they demonstrate submitting to one another or a lack of submission? \_\_\_\_\_

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10. Though the apostles didn't hesitate to be honest about the difficulties in the churches they wrote to, their letters also showed deep love for those churches. Even to the incorrigible Corinthians, Paul said, "I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 1:4).

Have you ever thanked God for His body, the church? It's often the furthest thing from our minds, especially when we're in the midst of the messier aspects of church life. Yet such thanksgiving is biblical—and often healing. List at least five things about your church that you can thank God for.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

11. Life in the body will always be varied: We will sin against each other, and we will demonstrate grace toward each other. The path through our hurts is not to pretend nothing has happened or to give in to cynicism, but to adopt Paul's prayer for the Ephesian church for ourselves and our fellow church members:

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. —Eph. 3:14-21