

Ephesians

Lesson 7 Ephesians 5:1-20

Leader Guide

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Lesson 7

Ephesians 5

Living as Imitators of God

Be very careful, then, how you live —not as unwise but as wise. *Ephesians 5:15*

Prayers

Read Ephesians 5:1-20

Eph 5:1 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children

Eph 5:2 and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Eph 5:3 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.

Eph 5:4 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

Eph 5:5 For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater —has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Eph 5:6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.

Eph 5:7 Therefore do not be partners with them.

Eph 5:8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light

Eph 5:9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)

Eph 5:10 and find out what pleases the Lord.

Eph 5:11 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.

Eph 5:12 For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.

Eph 5:13 But everything exposed by the light becomes visible,

Eph 5:14 for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

Eph 5:15 Be very careful, then, how you live —not as unwise but as wise,

Eph 5:16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

Eph 5:17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

Eph 5:18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

Eph 5:19 Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,

Eph 5:20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Discuss

1. What is our motivation for living a life of love, an imitator of God?

Our motivation is Christ's love for us by giving himself up as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

2. In chapter 4, Paul contrasts behaviors characterizing life in Christ with old behaviors that need to be put off. In chapter 5, Paul says something with grave consequences; there are serious sins that can exclude a person from the kingdom of God. These sins can be forgiven with repentance

and faith in Christ, but they can't be practiced by anyone who claims they are in the body of Christ. Paul tells the Corinthian church the same thing (1 Corinthians 5:11, 2 Corinthians 12:21). What sins does Paul specifically name that are so grievous to God?

^{1Co 5:11} But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat. ¹² What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? ¹³ God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you."

^{2Co 12:21} I am afraid that when I come again my God will humble me before you, and I will be grieved over many who have sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual sin and debauchery in which they have indulged.

^{Eph 5:5} For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. ⁷ Therefore do not be partners with them.

Paul lists immorality, impurity, and greed (idolatry) as sins that can exclude an inheritance from the kingdom of God. In 1 Corinthians, Paul includes slander, drunkenness, and swindling. Sexual sin and orgies were always part of pagan worship both in Old Testament and New Testament times. Christians were caught in the trap of professing Christ but visiting the pagan temple prostitutes. Paul is telling them they cannot do that and call themselves Christians. This is not to say they had no hope, there is always hope in Christ! They needed to repent, turn from their sinful practices, and ask for forgiveness.

3. How have Christians in American society compromised their standards of sexual morality?

According to Christian research groups, Barna and Proven Men Ministries, Christian views toward sex in America mirror the rest of society. These views and actions include premarital sex, cohabitation, marital infidelity, and pornography.

Cohabitation and premarital sex are considered the norm in American culture. 86% of men begin having sexual intercourse before age 21, and 25% before age 16. Likewise, 78% of women begin having sexual intercourse before age 21, and 18% before age 16. Statistics regarding premarital sex are similar in all age groups, 18-30, 31-50, and over 50. Cohabitation and dating have become synonymous. Two-thirds of Americans believe living with their partner is a good idea to test their compatibility before marriage. American Christians view cohabitation similarly; 59% of practicing Christians believe cohabitation before marriage is a good idea. Evangelical Christians, who comprise about 12% of American Christians, are an exception. They believe the Bible is the inerrant, infallible Word of God and believe sexual purity is to be celebrated and consummated in marriage. Only 6% of Evangelical Christians believe cohabitation is a good idea.

A casual attitude toward sexual purity is carried into marriage. About 35% of American men admit to having sexual affairs with others during their marriage. The rate of adultery in marriage is not much different for born-again Christians; 31% of born-again Christian men admit to having affairs while married. Once adultery begins, it is likely to be repeated; 75% of men engaged in adultery have sex

with more than one other partner. Women report a lower incidence of having affairs; 17% of women have affairs, and 38% have more than one other partner.

Pornography is a blight in American culture. Of American men, 65% view pornography at home and work at least once a month, 54% of born-again Christian men view porn at least once a month at home and 44% at work. Pornography particularly afflicts young men. Of men between 18 to 30, 79% view porn at least monthly and 44 percent believe they might be addicted to pornography. Viewing pornography by women in the US varies greatly by age and religious background. Women between the ages of 18-30, 34%, view porn monthly at home and work. The number of Christian women viewing pornography is about half the national average.

As Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:19, "Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity."

What impact does sexual impurity have on our children? Estimates of sexual abuse of children vary widely because it is so under-reported. Estimates of the abuse of girls range between 10-17% (to as high as 25%) that a girl will suffer child abuse before age 18. Estimates for the abuse of boys are about 4% (1 in 25). The sexual abuse of children leaves lifetime damage. Sexually abused youth are twice as likely to be arrested for violent crimes as adults, suffer from life-long mental health issues, drug and alcohol addiction, and attempt or die from suicide. 95% of teen prostitutes were sexually abused as children. Sexual abusers are more likely to be male family members or friends of the family.

4. Paul reminds the Ephesians in verses 5:8-18 they were called from the darkness of sin into the light of a new life in Christ, filled by his Spirit. Light and darkness are common themes in scripture. What was Jesus teaching his followers about their faith in his light parables?
 - a. Summarize Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:14-16

Mt 5:14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.

Mt 5:15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.

Mt 5:16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Faith in Christ should result in a life of "light," evident to all, and a blessing to all so they will praise God for your good deeds.

- b. Summarize Jesus' teaching in Matthew 6:22-24

Mt 6:22 "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light.

Mt 6:23 But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

Mt 6:24 "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

As children of light, we should be mindful of what we expose our minds to, good things and not nasty things. We should not have any part of "darkness" because it corrupts us.

5. Given Jesus' teaching, what did Paul likely mean in verses 11-14: "Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

Paul is saying to live as children of light, focused on what is holy, good, and pure. Just as light drives away darkness, setting our minds on what is good and noble directs our lives away from temptation and sin so that others "may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

Paul is probably talking about living by example when he says to expose the fruitless deeds of darkness. He is not saying to point out the sins of our neighbors who are not believers, but he might be referring to associating with sexually immoral Christians. In 1 Corinthians 5:9-10, he wrote, "I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case, you would have to leave this world."

6. Throughout chapter 5, Paul gives instructions about living as children of God. In verse 17, Paul says something extraordinary; we should understand the Lord's will. Just imagine what it means to have insight into the incomprehensible mind of God. Review Ephesians 5:8-17, and discuss the Lord's will for our life.

^{Eph 5:8} For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) ¹⁰ and find out what pleases the Lord. ^{Eph 5:15} Be very careful, then, how you live —not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

- a. ^{Col 1:9} For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

^{Jas 1:5} If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

We pray for the wisdom to understand God's will.

- b. ^{1Th 4:3} It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable

^{1Pe 1:15} But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do;

God tells us his will through the scriptures; he wants us to live holy lives.

- c. ^{Mt 22:37} Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Mt 7:12 **So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.**

God's will is that we love him and love our neighbor.

- d. ^{Phil 2:9} Therefore God exalted him [Christ Jesus] to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

God loves his Son, and it is his will that everyone worships him and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

- e. ^{Eph 1:3} Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.
^{Eph 1:4} For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.
^{Eph 1:7} In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸ that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

God's will is to bless us. He chose us to be holy and blameless by uniting us with Christ's holiness and his indwelling Spirit, he adopted us as his children so that we would be with him through eternity, and he redeemed us through the blood of Christ and forgives all our sins.

Closing

Lord God, we pray for the wisdom to understand your will for our lives. You have taught us that You have a plan for each of us. Your hand guides our steps and provides us with all we need. Forgive our sins and guide us to desire holy lives. We pray that we do the good works you have prepared for us and pray that we are eager to praise our Lord Jesus and your goodness.