

CORE Seminar  
Spring 2024  
Paul's Letter to the Ephesians  
Week 7: Ephesians 5-6:9

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**ICE BREAKER**

Choose an ice breaker from the *Spring Community Group Guide* or go to [www.fbcportland.org/icebreakers](http://www.fbcportland.org/icebreakers) to select an ice breaker to ask your group.

- Spend about 5 minutes discussing the question – this is a great way to “warm up” your group.

**INTRODUCTION**

Welcome back to **week 7!** We hope you are enjoying your group time and learning from Paul's letter to the Ephesians. This week we'll be in **Ephesians 5** through **Ephesians 6:9**. In our reading today, we'll see that Paul teaches how Christ's work in the believer should produce a vastly different behavior in the Christian compared to the sin that is practiced in the world. This leads to some of the strongest warnings against sin. In addition, Paul also provides instructions for living out the calling of Jesus Christ in the home and at work. He emphasizes the importance of being filled with the Spirit for wise living, highlighting the need for Spirit-led wisdom alongside love and submission to fulfill these commands.

Everyone ready to get started? Ok, let's pray...

**PRAYER**

**Have someone in your group read Ephesians 5:1-2**

**5 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. <sup>2</sup> And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.**

Well, there is “**therefore**” again – you have to ask yourself, “what's it there for...”

- And it's a point back to Paul's words in Ephesians 4, in how Christians [*the church*] should relate to one another in Unity.
- So, you [*Unified body of believers that make up the church*] be imitators of God – let God be your example [*His Words... His ways... His Holiness*]

Have someone in your group read **1 Peter 1:15-16** to help the group understand better what Paul is speaking of here in imitating God.

Sometimes we need an example of what our responsibility looks like – in this case “imitation.” So, Paul says we should imitate as **children**. And that is probably one of the best illustrations I have ever read. Children do not only imitate one another, or what they see on television [how many times did the boys go out in the backyard and try and pull off a last second shot OR a game winning Hail Mary touchdown?!?] OR what they see in their own homes. Parents will often listen to the words or see the action of their child and say, “they are just like me!”

This is the imitation Paul is stating we should have. And then he tells us what we should imitating:

- Walk in **love** as Christ loved us.
- **Sacrifice** as Christ gave Himself up for us.
- And **live** as a fragrant offering, as a sacrifice to God.

**QUESTIONS: How can a human being possibly imitate God?**

- **Why is it easier to think of the imitation of Christ? How is imitating Christ the same as imitating God?**

**What does it mean to walk in love?**

- **Why is it important for us to look to God, to his Word, and to Christ to know what true love is?**
- **How might we get love wrong if left to ourselves?**

**Have someone in your group read Ephesians 5:3-10**

**<sup>3</sup> But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. <sup>4</sup> Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. <sup>5</sup> For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. <sup>6</sup> Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. <sup>7</sup> Therefore do not become partners with them; <sup>8</sup> for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light <sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), <sup>10</sup> and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.**

Since the first two verses are teaching us what actions to imitate, Paul tells us in **verses 3-7** **what not** to imitate. **Don't imitate** the sexually immoral, those who are impure, Or those who covet. Don't be those who talk foolishly, with filth OR make crude jokes at the expense of others. He said that those who imitate or practice these things will have **"no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God."** So, Paul says, don't partner with them.

Instead, **"walk as children of the light,"** with **thanksgiving** in your heart and in your words AND **"try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord."**

**QUESTIONS: Why does Paul issue the stern warning that those who live in sin have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ?**

- **How might a self-righteous person misapply this warning?**
- **How might someone with a particularly sensitive conscience misapply this?**
- **What is Paul's intention?**

**Have someone in your group read Ephesians 5:11-21**

**<sup>11</sup> Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. <sup>12</sup> For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. <sup>13</sup> But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, <sup>14</sup> for anything that becomes visible is light.**

**Therefore it says,  
"Awake, O sleeper,  
and arise from the dead,  
and Christ will shine on you."**

**<sup>15</sup> Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. <sup>18</sup> And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, <sup>19</sup> addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, <sup>20</sup> giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.**

In **verse 11**, what's interesting is that Paul states that Christians should not take part in the **"unfruitful works of darkness."** BUT he doesn't say we should **avoid** the people who are in **darkness**. In fact, he instructs that we should be the light in midst of darkness – to make things more visible.

It's kind of like this – compared to the bright lights of Nashville – Portland is relatively dark. But, when the high school is playing a football game OR the kids are playing summer softball/ baseball you can see the stadium lighting brighten up the sky. This light from these sources provide those who live in around Portland with a sense of direction and bearing.

**Verses 15-21** helps us to understand how Jesus calls us to be the light of the world – because we have been transformed and because we are working to imitate God – we give a sense of “direction and bearing” to help others notice and be led to glorify God.

This includes **submitting** to one another “**out of reverence for Christ.**” That is definitely a trait that would stand out in a world that glorifies power, authority and position OVER submission. Culture considers submission a weakness, while Scripture considers it a key trait in the Kingdom of God.

**QUESTIONS: How does life in darkness contrast with life in the light?**

- **How might we mis-apply the command to take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness?**

**What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit?**

- **How will a person who is filled with the Spirit show it within the Christian congregation?**

**Why is our singing important?**

- **Who are we to sing “to”?**
- **Since we are singing to God - worshiping God - why do Christians get so upset about style, or types of music that are sung on Sunday?**
- **What is the role of those leading worship from the stage? [Not to sing to but to lead the congregation in worship towards God]**

**What does it mean for Christians to submit to one another?**

**Have someone in your group read Ephesians 5:22-33**

**<sup>22</sup> Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. <sup>24</sup> Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.**

**<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, <sup>26</sup> that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup> so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.**

<sup>28</sup> In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, <sup>30</sup> because we are members of his body. <sup>31</sup> “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” <sup>32</sup> This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup> However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

In **Ephesians 5:22–33**, Paul continues to reveal how unified Christians should live out their life – to be the **light** in the darkness. In this case, he discusses the roles of husbands and wives in marriage. Wives are to **submit** to their own husbands as to the Lord.

In **verse 22**, we see the word “submit” again. But, we also see that Paul provides “limits” to the submission of wives:

1. **First**, wives should only submit **“to [their] own husbands.”** The Bible never commands a *general* submission of women unto men in society. This order is commanded only in the spheres of the home and in the church. God has not commanded in His word that men have exclusive authority in the areas of politics, business, education, and so on.<sup>1</sup>
2. **Second**, Paul tells the wives that they should submit to their husband as they do **“to the Lord.”** So, just as God would never ask His children to sin or to do anything unethical, the wives should not obey if asked to do something wrong. They should prioritize their submission to God above all else.

For husbands, they are instructed to **love** their wives deeply – even **sacrificially**. Paul states that husbands should love their wives just as Christ loves the church. This means they should not misuse their authority or be controlling. Instead, they should cherish and care for their wives, just as Jesus does for his followers.

**QUESTIONS: What does it mean for a wife to “submit” to her husband? Will submission look the same, practically speaking, in every home? Discuss.**

- **What is the primary motivation for a wife to submit to her husband?**

**Are there limits to a wife’s submission?**

- **In other words, is there ever a time when it is right for a wife to go against her husband’s wishes?**

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<sup>1</sup> David Guzik. [https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik\\_david/study-guide/ephesians/ephesians-5.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david/study-guide/ephesians/ephesians-5.cfm)

**What is the simple command that Paul issues to husbands?**

- **How is a husband to love his wife? What should it look like? What should his manner be?**

**Have someone in your group read Ephesians 6:1-4**

**6 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. <sup>2</sup>“Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), <sup>3</sup>“that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” <sup>4</sup>Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.**

Paul then moves from the marriage relationship to the relationship between parent and child – this is also the time that parents ask the children to pay attention so that they can hear this passage of Scripture!

Children are to obey their parents. This command reveals a couple of things:

- Parents are to teach their children in the instruction of the Lord, to love their children AND not to provoke [*deliberately make your child annoyed or angry*] their children.
- When a parent fulfills their responsibility, the child’s responsibility is to obey.

This passage goes very well with **Deuteronomy 6:4-15**. In this, Moses reminds Israel what their responsibility is to teach each generation about the provision of God. In **Deuteronomy 6:15**, we are also given an understanding of what happens when parents do not take this responsibility seriously. God said His anger would be **“kindled”** and He would, **“destroy you from off the face of the earth.”** By **Judges 2:11-15**, we discover the results of the parent’s not fulfilling their responsibility. The children stopped obeying, **“And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals.”**

This not only means that children have the responsibility to obey, but parents have the responsibility to *teach* their children obedience — one of the most important jobs for a parent.

**QUESTIONS: Why did Paul address Fathers specifically? Did he not think that mothers have a role to play in the raising of children?**

**What does the phrase “bring them up” mean?**

- **What does it mean to instruct in the Lord?**

**What happens when parents fail to instruct children in the Lord?**

## Have someone in your group read Ephesians 6:5-9

<sup>5</sup> Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, <sup>6</sup> not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, <sup>7</sup> rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, <sup>8</sup> knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. <sup>9</sup> Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

In this last section, Paul hits the final frontier in public life – the work place. In the work place, the employee should **“obey”** their employers with **“fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, AS YOU WOULD CHRIST...”** The words **“as you would Christ”** change our entire perspective as workers. It reminds us that our work can and should be done as if we were working for Jesus. *That’s because we are!*<sup>2</sup>

Thankfully, Paul gives the same instruction to the bosses. He writes that bosses should treat their employees with fairness and integrity – just as employees are instructed to work diligently and honestly for their employers. This mutual respect and commitment to Christ and to one another create a work environment centered on revealing the glory of God!

**QUESTIONS: What can we learn from Paul’s instructions to Christian bondservants?**

**What can we learn from Paul’s instructions to Christian masters?**

**How might this teaching apply to anyone who is in a position of authority over others?**

- **How does God want us to treat people who are over us? Why?**

**How can you improve your attitude toward someone you work with?**

Was there anything that stood out to you from **Ephesians 5-6:9**?

- Was there any “aha moment” for you?

**Next Week: Ephesians 6**

**CLOSING PRAYER**

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<sup>2</sup> David Guzik. [https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik\\_david/study-guide/ephesians/ephesians-6.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david/study-guide/ephesians/ephesians-6.cfm)