

Ephesians 5:1-6 Answers Walking in Love

Introduction: ESV **2 Corinthians 5:17** . . . if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Overview: Ephesians 4:17 began a new section about the total transformation we have in Christ. This new section is about renewal. It runs from 4:17 all the way to 6:9. Paul first gave general renewal admonitions to everyone (4:17-5:21), followed by renewal admonitions to specific groups (husbands, wives, fathers, children, slaves, masters). Today's lesson falls within the general admonitions for everyone.

******What two commands are we given in 5:1-2? We are to imitate (*mimétai*; "mimick") God and walk in love.**

Are these two commands separate or does the second explain the first (5:1-2)? It looks as if walking in love defines what it means to imitate God.

Word Study: "Walk" (5:2) is from *peripateo* and literally means "walking around" (*peri*). We are to be walking around in the sphere of love. *Compare 4:1, 4:17, 5:8, 5:15.*

1. This chapter starts off with "therefore" (5:1). What idea does "therefore" link back to? See 4:32. It seems to link back to the last sentence of chapter four: we are to forgive one another as God in Christ forgave us (4:32). "Therefore", be imitators of God and do the same, loving each other so much that we forgive each other.

Application: Some people seem to have the spiritual gift of offending people ~ not! What we should all have is the grace to forgive others for their offenses (real and imagined). It is good to often overlook an offense.

2. What is the connection between imitating God and being His beloved child (5:1)? See John 14:21a. The idea seems to be that a beloved child will want to imitate his parents.

ESV **John 14:21** Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me.

Application: God accepts us just as we are, but He does not leave us as we are; He begins to change us, to make us like He is.

ESV **Leviticus 11:44** . . . I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy.

ESV **1 John 3:2** Beloved, we are God's children . . . we know that when he appears we will be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

3. What standard for walking in love did Paul set before us (5:2)? See *John 13:34*, *1 Corinthians 9:21*, *Romans 13:8-10*. We are to walk in love as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us.

ESV **John 13:34** A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

New Covenant Theology: New covenant believers are under the Law of Christ (**1Co 9:21**). The Law of Christ consists of only one law: We are love one another as Christ loved us. From this one law flows all other laws.

ESV **Romans 13:8-10** Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

According to 5:2, how did God the Father regard Christ's love and self sacrifice for us? God the Father regarding Christ's sacrificial love for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Word Study: "Fragrant" (5:2) is from *euodia*; *eu* means good and *odia* is basis for our word "odor". A good odor! The KJV has "sweetsmelling".

4. Based on 5:2, what can we do that would be regarded as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God? We could imitate Jesus, walk in love, forgive each other and give ourselves in serving each other.

Application: In a smaller, relationship based church fellowship, there will be plenty of opportunities for us to offend each other. In such contexts the importance of forgiving one another and giving ourselves up for each other and loving one another becomes crystal clear.

******What does it mean to walk as children of light (5:3-14)?** It means to awake from the sleep of spiritual death and let the quickening light of Christ shine on us. Being in the light means we are able to see right from wrong and discern what is pleasing to the Lord and forsake the deeds of darkness.

According to 5:3-6, what behaviors are to be far from us? (Reread). The three he repeats are sexual immorality, impurity and covetousness. Another sin listed is having a foul mouth.

5. How is sexual immorality different from impurity? (5:3)? "Sexual immorality" is from *porneia* (basis for pornography) and it covers all sexual sins. It is a general term for sexual deviation, for any type of illicit sexual activity.

Impurity is from *akatharsia*; “catharsis” means cleansing or purification; the *a* means “not”. Thus, it means morally impure; not clean. The KJV has “uncleanness”. This could merely be a synonym for sexual immorality. Whereas sexual immorality applies to deeds, perhaps impurity refers to words, thoughts, intentions of the heart, desires and passions (Hendriksen, p. 228). John MacArthur says it means “immoral thoughts, passions, ideas, fantasies and every other form of sexual corruption” (p. 200).

Application: Pagan Gentile Roman culture was permeated with sexual immorality. Many temples were run by priestesses who were sacred prostitutes. Cicero argued with eloquence that young men ought to be allowed to visit prostitutes. It was the norm for men to have mistresses (Coleman & Peace, *Study Guide for Ephesians*, p. 46). Modern Western culture is becoming more and more like ancient Roman society. For example, television shows regularly present fornication in a positive light. Almost as many children are born out of wedlock (48%) as to married parents in the USA now. This persuasive culture of sexual immorality can be terribly tempting for Christians today, just as it was in the first century. Yet Paul says it is proper for such things not to be named among us.

6. In 5:4, why did Paul say about filthy, foolish, crude speech? Paul declares filthiness, foolish talk and coarse joking to be “out of place” (5:4). Impure talk has no place in the Christian’s conversation.

Word Studies: “Foolish” (5:4) is from *morologia*; *moro* is basis for moron and *logia* means words or speech. Thus, moronic speech, idiotic talk. “Crude joking” refers to taking an innocent comment and being able to turn it into a joke that is obscene or suggestive. Many television and radio talk show hosts excel at this vice.

ESV **James 1:26** If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue . . . this person's religion is worthless.

ESV **Matthew 12:36** . . . on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak . . .

7. Why is covetousness wrong (5:3)? See *Exodus 20:17* and ahead to 5:5. It is wrong because God explicitly told us not to covet! Covetousness is a jealous longing for what others possess (*ESV Study Bible*, p. 2270). According to 5:5, it is somehow similar to idolatry!

ESV **Exodus 20:17** You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.

8. How is it that covetousness related to idolatry (5:3, 5)? Greed encroaches on one’s relationship to God, taking God’s place as a focus of devotion (*ESV Study Bible*, p. 2298). An idol calls forth passionate commitment of time and energy. When a person covets what he is really saying is that God, and what God has given him, are not enough.

9. What counter action to coveting did Paul offer in 5:4? Instead of crude talk, Paul said there should be thanksgiving. Thanksgiving also helps us to overcome covetousness as we concentrate on the good things God has given us and others. We are to be thankful for God's blessings on other people.

Example: Suppose a wealthy businessman enters a contest and wins a new car. Rather than wishing that a more needy person had won it (or that you had won it), we are to thank God for blessing the rich man with the new car. God is sovereign over all things, including who wins which contests. Either we believe in His sovereignty and trust Him, or we show unconscious blasphemy through our thanklessness.

According to 5:5-6, of what can we be absolutely sure? (Reread). We can be sure of the fact that no one who practices immorality, impurity or covetousness will inherit the kingdom of God. Instead, he is under the wrath of God.

ESV 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 . . . Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

10. Jesus' death on cross paid for all of the sins of everyone who believes (including immorality, impurity and covetousness). How is it that we have to abstain from these sins in order to be saved? See Ephesians 2:8-10, James 2:17. It is not that we have to abstain from these sins in order to be saved. Rather, if we truly are saved we will abstain from these sins. We are saved by faith alone, but a faith that saves is never alone: it always produces a desire to live a holy life. The issue is quality of faith. We are not saved by faith plus works but rather a faith that works.

ESV James 2:17 . . . faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

11. Why did Paul feel the need to write, "let no one deceive you with empty words" (5:6)? There were obviously those who practiced such things and yet claimed to be Christians or who taught that salvation by grace means one can continue on such sins with impunity. Some may have even denied that such things were even sinful.

Examples:

- New Jersey governor Chris Christie declared that homosexuality is not a sin: "If someone is born that way, it's very difficult to say then that that's a sin". **Note:** We are all born with a sin nature!
- South African bishop Desmond Tutu said, "I would not worship a God who is homophobic and that is how deeply I feel about this." He also said, "I would refuse to go to a homophobic heaven . . . I would much rather go to the other place".
- When asked if a person living a gay lifestyle would escape hell as long as he has accepted Christ as his Savior, Exodus International director Alan Chambers replied in part, "...while behavior matters, those things don't interrupt someone's relationship with Christ." Speaking at a gathering of the Gay Christian Network Chambers also said, "We're Christians, all of us" (World magazine, 2013).

- A United Methodist minister, teaching a singles' class asked, "Does the Bible *really* condemn sex outside of marriage? I think what matters is that it must involve commitment" (personal experience, Brentwood United Methodist Church, Brentwood, Tennessee, 1983).

12. What exactly is the wrath of God (5:6)? See *Hebrews 10:26-31*. Wrath is from *orgé* and is "the divine reaction toward evil; it is thought of not so much as an emotion as in terms of the outcome of an angry frame of mind (*judgment*) . . . to be expected in the future, God's final reckoning with evil" (BAGD,p. 579). Thus is the basis for Jonathan Edward's sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God".

ESV **Hebrews 10:31** It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

So What?

13. What reasons did Paul give for us not to become partners with those who do such things (5:7-10)? See *1 John 1:5-7*. One reason ("therefore") is because the wrath of God is coming against those who practice such things. Another reason is because we formerly were ourselves in darkness, but now we are light in the Lord and we are to walk in that light.

ESV **1 John 1:5-7** . . . God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light . . . the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

According to 5:9, what is the fruit of being the children of light? The fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.

ESV **John 15:8** By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

14. What must we always try to discern in every situation (5:10)? We must try to discern what is pleasing to the God. Not every situation is black and white; it takes wisdom and maturity to know the Lord's will in some situations (the grey areas). This applies to who we marry, what job to take, where to live, which church to be involved with, to drink alcohol or to abstain, how much alcohol to drink, who you go hunting with, what you do on your weekends, etc.

15. What is the main point or topic of 5:1-6?

16. What does it mean to imitate God and walk in love? 5:1-2.

17. What lifestyle choices bring down the wrath of God and qualify a person to be a son of disobedience? 5:3-6.

**** = ask this question before reading the text aloud. This is put people's minds in gear and them something to look for as the text is read. It causes focus.

Teacher's note: These lessons are based on the ESV and are designed for 45 minute sessions. If you can hand out or email out each lesson's questions a week in advance it will encourage people to think about the passage during the week. Coving each question in class will give importance to the questions and give incentive for the class to spend time preparing for the discussion.

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