



Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Ephesians 5.1-20

Prepared by Rev. Curtis A. Bronzan, ThM
curtis@gspc.org | 562/493.2553 x115

I. Introduction to this Study

This week we continue our fall series Welcome Home, engaging the Apostle Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus, exploring how to live a distinctive life of discipleship.

II. Connecting With One Another

Have you ever tried to walk through a dark room without turning on the light? How did that go!?

III. Study the Text

- a. Last week we engaged Ephesians 4.17-32, thinking together about how to put on our new wardrobe in Christ. Reread that passage, then continue on into Ephesians 5.1-2, the first few verses of this week's text.

How does Ephesians 5.1-2 continue Paul's line of thought from chapter 4?

- b. In 4.32, Paul writes, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." This mode of comparison continues into the first couple verses of chapter 5. Locate these two instances, then write them in your own words:

Verse 1: _____

Verse 2: _____

- c. It's common for Christians to engage "the imitation of Christ," whether inspired by passages like this, the Thomas à Kempis book of the same name, Charles Sheldon's *In His Steps*, or the more recent *What Would Jesus Do?* trend. Which of these - or others - have been meaningful in your Christian journey?

Which of the metaphors in Ephesians 5.1-2 most get your attention (e.g. "as dearly loved children," "walk in the way of love," or "gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering")? Why?

- d. Read Ephesians 5.3-7.

Ancient writings commonly included lists of vices and virtues. Here, Paul writes a brief list of behaviors that Christians should not engage in. Why do you think he included each of these? Are they still to be avoided today? Jot your thoughts next to each below:

Sexual Immorality _____

Impurity _____

Greed _____

Inappropriate Speech _____

- e. Why, on the other hand, do you think prescribes thanksgiving?

It's been written that "desire comes out of dissatisfaction with what we have. Thanksgiving, on the other hand, not only expresses satisfaction but, in a sense, can even create satisfaction within us."

How is desire the opposite of satisfaction? Why should we be satisfied in Christ?

How does the above quote help you understand thanksgiving as an antidote to sexual immorality, impurity, greed, and inappropriate speech?

- f. In verses 5-6, we hear the most serious need for moral change - our eternal destiny. While we don't often hear this "fire and brimstone approach" in our culture, Paul seems content to engage it here.

One commentator writes, "beyond the invitation to peace, a fulfilled life, the joy of salvation and so forth, there is a starkly different kind of approach that one does not hear often anymore. That is the threat of unending separation from God, of eternal loneliness, of blackest darkness forever, in short, of hell itself. This reality should, if declared in the proper manner in the power of God, turn people to Christ."

Do you agree with this last line? Why or why not?

- g. Paul's argument is strengthened by the structure of Ephesians 5.3-7. Use your own words to fill in the outline below:

A Command (3-4): _____

B Basis for the command (5): _____

B' Basis for the command (6): _____

A' Command (7): _____

- h. Read Ephesians 5.8-14.

The metaphor of darkness and light is common throughout the Scriptures (see, for instance, John 12.36 or 1st Thessalonians 5.5). "Fruit of the light" however, is rather unusual ("Fruit of the Spirit" in Galatians 5.22-23 is more understandable).

"Yet even before the knowledge of photosynthesis, people knew that plants need light to grow and bear fruit. Also, given the identification of God himself as light (1st John 1.5), it is not an impersonal or lifeless light that produces fruit in believers."

What does it mean for you to be a "child of the light"? In other words, how do you best open yourself up to the beaming brightness of God, that you might flourish in faith?

- i. In verse 9, Paul lists the comprehensive virtues of goodness, righteousness, and truth. Where do you see those in other followers of Jesus? Other members of Good Shepherd? Others in your small group?

Have you ever encouraged them by sharing that with them?

- j. Verse 10 encourages believers to "find out what pleases the Lord." This does not mean that it's difficult to know what he wants, but rather implies testing and approval. In other words, "God wants us to approve what he would approve, that is, what *pleases* him."

How have you sought to "approve what God would approve"?

In prayer? Fasting? Guidance from Scripture? Communal discernment with others?

- k. Verse 13 states, "everything exposed by the light becomes visible - and everything that is illuminated becomes a light." In one sense, this is the ongoing work of following Jesus,

seeking to be his disciple. We are to continually expose ourselves to the light, opening up the unexposed, dark parts of our lives to the light of Christ.

What parts of your life do you need to expose to the light of Christ today? Think of three:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Before continuing on, spend a few minutes allowing God's Holy Spirit to speak light into these areas of darkness.

l. Read Ephesians 5.15-21.

Paul's contrasts continue in these verses. Complete this chart below:

15-16: Not as _____ but as _____ so that you can _____

17: Do not be _____ but _____

18-20: Do not get _____ because it leads to _____ instead _____

_____ with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. _____

from your heart to the Lord, _____ to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What would our church look like if we took seriously these three contrasts and their implications for living?

IV. Pray

- a. Lift up those who have not yet put their faith in Jesus, experiencing the power of his resurrection life and the "new wardrobe" we are given in Him, that they would open themselves up to His love,
- b. Pray that Good Shepherd would take seriously these imperatives for holy living, not merely because the Apostle Paul authored them, but because they have been inspired by God's Spirit and are authoritative in our lives,
- c. Ask God to guide the leaders of Good Shepherd this weekend during their Mission Affinity Group meeting with Trinity United, Santa Ana, and Christ Pacific, Huntington Beach (learn more at <http://eco-pres.org/covenant-relationship/>).