

## p 73 WEEK 10: WALKING IN LOVE

Ephesians 5:1–14

### The Place of the Passage

Paul continues to expound on the new life that results from the outworking of Christ's election of the believer. As head of the church, Christ's power transforms the body so that believers' behavior is vastly different from the natural ways practiced in the world. Some of the strongest warnings against sin and most graphic descriptions of sin and judgment in all of Paul's writings are found in this passage.

### The Big Picture

In Ephesians 5:1–14, the believer's walk of love imitates Christ in order to please God and avoid the dangers of the works of darkness. The passage begins by presenting an ethical basis for the call away from worldly vices. The remainder of the verses toggles between spiritually dark vices and the consequences of continuing in them.

### p 74 Reflection and Discussion

**Read through the complete passage for this study, Ephesians 5:1–14. Then review the questions below and record your notes and reflections on this section of Ephesians. (For further background, see the *ESV Study Bible*, page 2270; available online at [www.esvbible.org](http://www.esvbible.org).)**

#### 1. New Role Model (5:1–6)

Paul calls the believers to be “imitators of God” just as children imitate the behavior of their parents. How does the parent-child relationship that God shares with us raise the level of expectation of a changed life? How does imitating one who was a “fragrant offering” strengthen the motivation for believers to imitate Christ?

Paul's prohibitions against ungodly passions are absolute—they “must not even be named among you.” Based on 5:1–2 (and all of Ephesians 1–4), why is it “proper among saints” to separate completely from the vices of sexual immorality, impurity, and covetousness?

p 75 Why are indecent behavior (“filthiness”), words of foolishness, and crude joking “out of place” for the children of God? How does thanksgiving work in the heart and mind of the believer to counter the believer's attraction to these three vices?

Paul places covetousness within the realm of “idolatry.” How is Paul able to equate them?

In what sense does Paul exclude from inheritance in the kingdom of God believers who fall into sexual immorality, make themselves impure, or covet the possessions of others? What impetus for imitating Christ does this add to the call to walk in love?

Paul warns the Ephesians against “empty words” that could tempt them to forfeit the inheritance promised to believers. To what sort of words might Paul be referring? How does the reference to God’s wrath help clarify the warning about missing the inheritance promised to believers?

### p 76 **2. New Partnerships (5:7–14)**

When Paul says, “Do not become partners with them” (v. 7), he places limitations on the relationships of believers to the surrounding culture. Based on the previous use of “at one time ... but now” in 2:11–13, what does Paul mean by this metaphorical use of “darkness” and “light”? What is Paul saying about the significance of one’s salvation in making decisions about types of relationships one should develop or maintain with the “sons of disobedience”?

As the “fruit of light,” how does the child of God walk as a child “of light”? How does walking as a child of light help one live pleasingly before God?

The vices Paul prohibits are “unfruitful” before God. How does walking as a child of light make it evident to unbelievers that their lack of morality needs to be exposed?

p 77 How does Paul’s use of “light” in Ephesians 5:13 clarify what he means by “expose”? To what is Paul referring in the process of going from being exposed (v. 13) to becoming light (v. 14)?

The quotation in 5:14 might represent a mixture of lines from Isaiah 9:2; 26:19; 50:9–10; and 60:1–2. Based on Paul’s use of light and darkness, when the “sleeper” awakes, what will be taking place in his life?

**Read through the following three sections on *Gospel Glimpses*, *Whole-Bible Connections*, and *Theological Soundings*. Then take time to consider the *Personal Implications* these sections may have for you.**

## **Gospel Glimpses**

**PLEASING AROMA.** Scripture records Noah making the first offering described as a “pleasing aroma” (Gen. 8:21). Noah sheds the blood of several clean animals and offers them as burnt offerings. The fragrance from the offering—indicating an atoning sacrifice—sufficiently satisfies God’s displeasure against man’s evil to prevent another flood judgment. The various offerings of the law provide this same pleasing aroma (Ex. 29:18, 25, 41; Lev. 1:9, 13, 17). The goal of these offerings is to make sinful people pleasing to God. And, despite the failure of Israel to follow the Lord in obedience, the Lord nevertheless promises to make them a pleasing aroma (Ezek. 20:41). Redemptive history reveals Christ to be the fulfillment of the fragrant offering and acceptable sacrifice that provides the pleasing aroma to God, making sinful people pleasing in his sight (Heb. 7:27; 9:14; 10:12).

**p 78 SUBSTITUTION.** From the time of the fall, substitutionary sacrifice has been the God-given hope of mankind. Since we humans cannot pay the penalty for our sin, a substitute is needed (Rom. 6:23). Therefore, God promises a “seed” who will come and take the bruising that should be man’s (Gen. 3:15). The slaying of animals to provide skins to cover Adam and Eve’s guilt and take away their insufficient covering for sin provides an early foreshadowing of Christ’s substitution for us (Gen. 3:21). Similarly, God’s provision of a ram in place of Isaac (Gen. 22:8, 13) and a slain goat for Israel’s sin (Lev. 16:7–10, 20–22) each point forward to the Lamb of God (John 1:36). Christ is the just one who gave himself for the unjust, the one without sin who became sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 5:2; 1 Pet. 3:18).

## Whole-Bible Connections

**COVETOUSNESS.** Covetousness of any kind runs contrary to the gospel. The law of God establishes coveting as sin (Ex. 20:17; Deut. 5:21). Coveting reveals a heart unsatisfied with God’s provision. This sin has plagued mankind throughout its history, arising first in Eve (Gen. 3:6; Rom. 1:29). The believer must fight covetousness at every turn (Luke 12:15; Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5). So powerful is this sin even among believers that it often sits at the root of conflict within the church (James 4:1–5).

**LIGHT VERSUS DARKNESS.** When the earth was formless and void, and no physical light was present in the universe, God called light out of darkness (Gen. 1:3; 2 Cor. 4:6). Since that time, “light” and “darkness” have stood for the metaphorical polar opposites of righteousness and evil. The plague of darkness over Egypt was indicative of their spiritual darkness, whereas the light among the Israelites indicated their beloved status before God (Ex. 10:22–23). Gentiles walking in darkness were to see a great light in the coming of Christ (Isa. 9:1–2; Matt. 4:16–17). Eventually, the one who came as the Light of the World hung on a cross in darkness, bearing the reproach of sinners (Matt. 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44). Believers cannot walk in darkness while claiming to have fellowship with God; instead, they must “walk in the light, as [God] is in the light” (1 John 1:6–7).

## Theological Soundings

**INHERITANCE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.** Three times in Paul’s writings he excludes sinful people from the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9–10; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5). These references to the destiny of unbelievers serve as strong warnings to believers to examine themselves for evidence of a life transformed by p 79 Christ. The warnings do not question the salvation of those called by God. Instead, they recognize that believers do not live in sin, and that people who choose to live in sin should not deceive themselves by thinking they are believers.

**SEXUAL IMMORALITY.** Ephesians 5:1–5 condemns sexual immorality as behavior that does not flow from love (vv. 1–2), is not self-sacrificing (v. 2), does not imitate Christ (v. 2), is improper for saints (v. 3), and excludes participation in the inheritance of the kingdom of Christ. Paul calls for sexual purity in the life of the believer—possible only by the power of Christ (4:22–24). The apostle does not portray sexual immorality as something one cannot overcome or resist. Instead, Paul’s writings consistently demand that sexual immorality become a thing of the past, in accord with the new life that comes in Christ (1 Cor. 5:9–11; 6:9–11; 10:8; Gal. 5:19; Col. 4:3; 1 Thess. 4:3; 1 Tim. 1:10).

## Personal Implications

Take time to reflect on the implications of Ephesians 5:1–14 for your own life today. Consider what you have learned that might lead you to praise God, repent of sin, and trust in his gracious promises. Make notes below on the personal implications for your walk with the Lord of the (1) *Gospel Glimpses*, (2) *Whole-Bible Connections*, (3) *Theological Soundings*, and (4) this passage as a whole.

1. Gospel Glimpses

2. Whole-Bible Connections

p 80 3. Theological Soundings

4. Ephesians 5:1–14

## As You Finish This Unit ...

Take a moment now to ask for the Lord’s blessing and help as you continue in this study of Ephesians. And take a moment also to look back through this unit of study, to reflect on some key things that the Lord may be teaching you—and perhaps to highlight and underline these things to review again in the future.