

## Ephesians 5

Good morning and thank you for joining us! Would you please turn in your bibles to Ephesians 5?

Last week as we closed out Chapter 4 we saw how the Bible told us to put on and put off - now that we're God's kids we need to dress like it and act like it. How our actions should be in accordance with our new life in Christ. And chapter 5 continues these instructions-acting and behaving like God's kids.

Remember we spent several months studying the glorious truths of chapters 1-3, so we would know who we are- we're blessed, chosen, adopted, redeemed, forgiven, accepted, sealed!

And because of all this we're to put off the way we used to live before Christ, and act like the new creations we are. Because if we don't put off those old behaviors, and bad habits, and false notions, and foul language, and destructive attitudes that carried over from the past, they can undermine our walk with Christ.

When we understand what Jesus did for us, we'll love Him passionately, and desire to follow Him willingly. It's not that we need to do these things cuz the pastor tells me, or it's in our church mission statement. No, our desire will be to imitate Christ- we'll be motivated by our love for Him!

And love is the subject of the rest of chapter 5, for love must be the motivation for all we do as Christians.

We're gonna study verse 1-7, and the title of this morning's message is For the Love of God

## LET'S PRAY

Remember, when the Bible was written there were no verses or chapter breaks. So to make sure we're not taking anything out of context lets read chapter 4 v 30 through chapter 5 v 1

30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

1 Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. Now, the therefore immediately points you back to the last verse of chapter 4 where we are exhorted to be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God has forgiven us.

It's telling us that God's forgiveness is our example of forgiveness. We're to follow the example that God has established for us in forgiveness.

Sadly, the world today looks for human inspiration and wisdom on the subject of mental health. But the Bible gives us the very blueprint to mental health.

A critical component of mental health is a forgiving spirit. If you are holding bitterness or animosity in your heart towards someone else, that bitterness is going to do you a lot more harm than it is them because unforgiveness just eats away at you.

Over and over again throughout the Bible we see the scriptures emphasizing the importance of not only our being forgiving, but also for us to forgive.

When Jesus was giving to the disciples the model prayer, often called the Lord's prayer, there's a significant portion of it that revolves around forgiveness. **Matthew 6 9 In this manner, therefore, pray:**

**Our Father in heaven,  
Hallowed be Your name.  
10 Your kingdom come.  
Your will be done  
On earth as it is in heaven.  
11 Give us this day our daily bread.  
12 And forgive us our debts,  
As we forgive our debtors.**

It's not only asking for forgiveness, but also acknowledging the fact that we have received forgiveness and we need to be forgiving. Forgive us and help us to be forgiving as we forgive others.

There was only one part of that prayer that Jesus emphasized at the close of the prayer, and that was on forgiveness, **Matthew 6 14 "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.**

One of Jesus' favorite subjects to teach on revolved around the the topic of forgiveness.

You remember how one day Peter felt like he was getting the lesson and was looking for some extra credit from Jesus.

**Matthew 18 21 Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"** I'm sure that Peter felt that he was really growing in grace in that he could imagine forgiving someone for the same offense seven times. But do you remember Jesus' response?

**Matthew 18:22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."**

Imagine Peter's shock when Jesus answered him, "No, Peter. Seventy times seven." Four hundred and ninety?

The Lord was demonstrating to Peter, and us, that forgiveness is not a matter of math. Because before you ever get to the four hundred and ninety, you would have forgotten the count. And you would just go on forgiving.

Forgiveness isn't a matter of mathematics; it's a matter of the spirit. God wants us to have a forgiving spirit.

The world tells us yes, you have been wronged. Yes, you have a right to be angry. Yes, you have a right to be upset over the whole situation. Go ahead, eat yourself up, and dwell on it and focus on it and be consumed by it. That's the world's method.

Or, as a child of God, you can forgive and be freed from all that.

Lets read 32 and 1 again

32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

1 Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. So you see how it ties to the previous verse in the previous chapter. God is the example for us in forgiveness; we are to be followers of God who has forgiven us.

Notice in verse 1-we're to imitate God as dear children.

Have you ever noticed how little kids try to mimic their parents? This is what children are prone to do. They mimic the adults in their life. The little girl sees mommy making dinner, and so she will grab her little pots and pretend to do the same.

**SHOW PIC** My son caleb loved to mow the lawn with me years ago **CLOSE PIC**

And I gotta tell ya, when a kid acts like his dad, it makes the dad proud.

And you should know this is how God feels when we mimic Him! Our desire to be like Him pleases God... But here's the question, how do we imitate God?

I can't mimic God's wisdom. His thoughts are higher than my thoughts... I can't imitate His power. All things are possible with God, whereas without Him I can do nothing...

I can't mimic His sovereignty. The Almighty God manipulates the jet stream. He created the Big Dipper. Half the time, I'm wandering my house wondering just where I put my wallet!

But there is a way you and I can mimic our Heavenly Father, and bring God joy. It's by forgiving, and read with me in verse 2,

2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. Christianity is defined by one word-it's love. 1 John 4:16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

And to walk with God is to "walk in love." 1 Corinthians 13 1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned,[fn] but have not love, it profits me nothing.

Certainly, God's love is deeper, and broader, and higher, and wider than my love - but I've tasted His love. I'm the object of His love. And on top of that... Romans 5:5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

God puts His love in our heart, which means we can love others with the same love God has given us. God has shown us grace, so we can be gracious. God has extended mercy, now we can be merciful. **1 John 3:18 My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.**

And never forget how God demonstrates His love! God wrote His definition of love in blood.

God shows all people for all times what true love is by drawing a picture. He used two beams of roughed-out wood, a little rope, some rusty nails, a cat-of-nine-tails, and a crown of thorns.

God points to a Roman cross and the sacrifice of His only Son, Jesus - and says, "There it is. That is love."

And today, the cross remains the standard, the plumb line, against which real love is measured and understood. Jesus told this before His death in **John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.**

I want to draw your attention to 3 words in verse 2 to describe Jesus' work on the cross, because in looking at these 3 words it helps us grasp the meaning of true love.

"given," "offering," "sacrifice"

Love is more than what our society often portrays it to be. Love is a decision to give. Despite what movies and TV tell us, love isn't dependent upon emotions and feelings. Rather love is a

deliberate choice we make to give of ourselves for another person's benefit.

Realize, lust and greed will always take. It's love that gives. Love is selfless... Love thinks: "what can I do for you?" While lust thinks: "what can you do for me?"

It was Amy Carmichael who wrote, "You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving."

And this is the love Jesus exhibited on the cross. **Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

The second word verse 2 uses to describe the real love that Jesus demonstrated on the cross is "offering." And this was a familiar term to Temple Jews. The Jews paid tithes on their income. The tithe was a person's duty. It was what they owed to God.

But after the tithe was given, a person could add an "offering." The offering wasn't a duty, it was a delight. Nowhere was an offering mandated. It was given from the worshipper's heart - because they wanted to, not because they had to.

And this helps define the cross. Jesus went to the cross with a willing heart! And this is true love. Love is an offering, not an obligation. Love isn't "Ok, I'll do it if I must." Love wants to be involved. Love goes the second mile, and turns the other cheek. Real love goes out of its way to offer its help.



Verse 2 tells us love is all about “giving” and “offering.”

Finally, verse 2 tells us that real love is a “sacrifice.” This is the third word verse 2 uses. A sacrifice is more than a courtesy, or even a favor. It not just what’s convenient, a sacrifice is costly.

And love is a sacrifice, because to love another person is to lay down our lives for that person. Not necessarily in a single act of courage.

Real love is willing to lay down our lives, and rights, and conveniences, and comforts, and pleasures in a thousand daily different ways. Love is willing to slice up our lives in half-a million sacrifices over half-a-million hours...

Let’s read verse 2 one more time **2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma**

And this kind of love is a sweet aroma to God! When an animal sacrifice was placed on the altar, often a drink offering was poured out on the carcass. It was like sacred steak sauce.

In the OT barbecue was God’s favorite smell, but not anymore. Now love is what pleases our Father. Love is like “a sweet-smelling aroma” to the Lord.

And yet there’s a lot of stink going up from among Christians today that has the opposite effect - that’s a stench in God’s

nostrils! Selfishness and lust masquerading as love, pollutes the air rather than pleasing the Lord.

And this is what we need to evaluate in our own lives. Are we imitating God and demonstrating forgiveness, walking in love?

So we've seen what love is by Christ's example, and now the Bible also tells us what love is not. What we're about to read is the counterfeit of love-it's lust.

**3 But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints;** In this verse, just as he does with love, Paul also uses three broad terms to define lust-fornication, uncleanness and covetousness.

“Fornication” is the Greek word “porneia” from which we get the term pornography. In the first century it was a catch-all word for all kinds of illicit sexual activity.

“Uncleanness” means “impurity.” It's the same kind of general prohibition against sex outside marriage.

And “covetousness” or “greed,” in this context, is the desire to use someone else for your own gratification. These terms would include premarital sex, adultery, homosexuality, prostitution, incest, strip clubs, hook-ups, sexting, friends-with-benefits, etc.

Anything that feeds a person's sexual appetites apart from marriage... according to God isn't fitting for a Christian. And yet we can hear the critics now-how old fashioned!!

But we need to be reminded sometimes- who created sex in the first place? Sex was God's idea. God designed sex for bonding, pleasure and reproduction within the confines of marriage.

And since God is creator of sex, it means if God chooses to restrict the use of sex, that's well within His right to do so-and God has good reason to put guardrails around sex.

**SHOW PIC** Ben Franklin once said, "Sin is not hurtful because it is forbidden, rather sin is forbidden because it is hurtful." **CLOSE**

**PIC** The boundaries God puts around sex aren't intended to spoil our fun - they're put there for our protection

Realize, God created sex for marriage as a kind of super-glue. And once it's glued, if you pull it apart it doesn't break loose easily. It rips, and tears away at places that were never meant to be torn. It does serious damage. Sex was meant for a man and a woman in a marriage covenant - otherwise sex erodes a person's self-worth.

We must remember, especially you young people. If you're a Christian your body does not belong to you. It's been bought with a price. Your body belongs to Jesus. And if you give your body to someone without a blessing from God in the confines of holy marriage- it not only grieves God, it cheapens and degrades you in your own eyes.

Our culture today is confused about sex and love. People believe they're one in the same. Remember, love respects and looks out

for the other person's highest good. Love never dishonors, or dirties, or defiles who it loves. It insists on God's best!

Our modern society scoffs at what it calls the Bible's old-fashion, out-dated views on sex. **SHOW PIC** But let's ask, how are we doing as a society since the sexual revolution of the 60's and 70's? **CLOSE PIC** What kind of sexual landscape has the liberated attitude produced? Do you think folks are more fulfilled today? Is there less hurt and broken hearts - an upswing of self-worth?

No of course not! The sexual revolution has produced an explosion of STDs, and deviant behaviors, and a degrading of women, and unwanted pregnancies, countless abortions, and an epidemic number of single parents struggling to get by alone. Let alone the difficulty for a child of growing up in a single family home...

It's proof that the devils lies never produce the results the devil promises.

But God is clear-we're to walk in love, not lust. Can we really say as a society we'd be worse off if we did it Gods way?

Christianity's sexual boundaries set a high standard, but here's the reason, "A Christian is to walk in love." Love is giving, offering, sacrificing. The world walks in lust. The Christian walks in love

**4 neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.** Not only how we act,

but even how we talk should benefit the lives of those around us. You're not going to do it by sowing something into their memory bank that, though it may seem funny, is not beneficial.

The sad thing is I still remember things that I learned when I was 8 or 10 years old in the schoolyard. These dirty songs the other kids sang once in a while. One of them still flies by the screen in my mind and I'm like-where did that come from? You know, it's kind of like space junk, you know? We put so much stuff up there now that we've got to track. Thousands of pieces of junk that orbit, they come around once in a while.

And once in a while a piece of it drives by, you know, and I think, 'my God, that's still in there?' I can't believe it. It's been years.

The Bible tells us here that we will benefit others by the way we think and the way we speak and the way we use humor.

Look at the end of verse 4-hey sometimes we're better off saying, look, why don't we just give thanks to the Lord?

**5 For this you know,[fn] that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.** Verse 5 mentions three people - that no matter what these folks say - they're not headed to heaven.

They may claim to be Christians, but over time, neither of the three are capable of restraint. Their lives are completely out of control as they give into their lusts.

For the fornicator the issue is sex - for the unclean it's deviant thoughts - for the covetous man its money. And all 3 share a common thread-it's all about self. They're idolaters because they worship self.

Most of today's Americans would never bow before a statue or trinket - but they worship sex, or things, or money, or personal autonomy.

See whenever a person values something supremely - at all costs - it becomes an idol. When "IT" (whatever "IT" is) becomes more valuable to you than your relationship with God, then it has replaced the true God as your new god.

This is why it's such a problem to have sodomites in the pulpits of churches. You have homosexuals who are trying to say God approves of their lifestyle. That is 100% in opposition to what the bible says here isn't it. Because the fact is, they're actually idol worshippers because they are worshiping themselves.

Here's the issue with homosexuals in the pulpit-their sexuality is their identity, instead of the risen Christ being their identity.

**Matt 16 24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.**

Again this is the issue for the fornicator, and the unclean person, and the covetous or greedy - it's idolatry-they worship self instead of Jesus.

Luke 13 22 And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. 23 Then one said to Him, "Lord, are there few who are saved?"

And He said to them, 24 "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. 25 When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from,' 26 then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.' 27 But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.'

Here's the question I know you're asking, Are you saying a Christian will never struggle with sexual sin, or uncleanness, or greediness? Of course not-we all struggle.

Christians aren't perfect. We can be lured into sin, and struggle with giving into temptation. The operative word here is "struggle." A Christian will struggle with these sins. In fact, that's one of the pieces of evidence that proves they're a Christian.

The HS inside of them is pushing them to fight temptation and pursue victory over sin. They don't just cave in and accept the sin.

It's the person who doesn't care about what they do, or who they hurt - who has no desire "to walk in love" - who is all about gratifying self, that's the one with "no inheritance in the kingdom..."

To be clear-this isn't talking about the struggle we all have with our flesh. This is talking about the lifestyle of embracing one's flesh. If you cater to your flesh day after day, month after month, you need to take a careful look at your spiritual standing. Why is this so important?

6-7

**6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.**

**7 Therefore do not be partakers with them.** Therefore, because of God's wrath on sin and because a lifestyle of sinful activities are incompatible with life in Christ's kingdom.

To partake in joining other so-called Christians in their sinful activities is mocking the sacrifice Christ made in order to take away sin. They try to hide it under grace-we're covered by grace man, don't judge me-they're cheapening God's grace. They ignore verse 6-the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. There is a reckoning day coming.

True believers have been saved "from" that old self in order to "put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.



**SHOW PIC** Kim and I are gonna celebrate our 18th year of marriage this summer. Imagine I asked her to marry, you know, honey, will you marry me? **CLOSE PIC** And she said yes I'd love to, I really, I want to make a commitment and we'll spend our life together. But if you don't mind, I'll still continue to date other men.

How would that have gone over? How would that go over for you? It wouldn't would it?

Well, that's, what we're doing if we're lapsing back into those old things, we're the bride of Christ. You've made a commitment to God. We're supposed to be imitators of God.

But don't we find that sometimes we still want to date the old way of life, We still want to make appointments with it. We still want to date the world.

Be imitators. Be loving. If we're wrapped up in self-it's not loving is it?

May our prayers echo that of JTB

**John 3:30 "He must increase, but I must decrease."**