



## **Ephesians Week 11 – Ephesians 5:3-5**

*November 19, 2023 – Pastor Greg Wallace*

### Main Point

Intentionally counter discontentment, which leads to covetousness, with thankfulness.

Ephesians 5:3-5 (NLT) 3 “Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God’s people. 4 Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes— these are not for you. **Instead**, let there be thankfulness to God. 5 You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world.”

Here is what seems to be Paul’s initial progression: imitate God because you are His children (5:1) and the way to imitate Him is follow the sacrificial example of Jesus (5:2)

And now all of a sudden an unexplained jump to this: no sexual immorality, immorality, impurity, greed, obscene stories, foolish talk, or coarse jokes.

How do sex, greed, bad stories and jokes, and idolatry go together? Followed by this seemingly simple statement: “Instead, let there be thankfulness to God”

PAUSE: This a hard passage to figure out.

### When reading the Bible:

-The Bible is teaching us how to function. The God who created you is, through the Bible, giving us a huge chunk of the lives of those who did not listen and is showing us how it went for them. When reading it, we have to start with God is good. He is saying, “I created life. You jumped into death, and I am trying to teach you a different way. Pause and listen.”

-We need to assume the author is stable and competent. There is a reason for what they wrote, why they wrote it, and how they wrote it.

-The ideal goal is comprehension not completion. Don’t read the Bible to get through a section based on some idea you have of what success would look like in the discipline of studying scripture. Rather, the goal is comprehension. So you may need to read less, take time to dissect it, find other passages throughout the Bible that connect to it. This is how we learn.

-The “weird”, uncomfortable, and/or uncertain things are often places we need to stop and examine. We have the opportunity to learn. There IS a reason for it. (\*remember we add the chapter and verse breaks so in all of this, it was all written together as a letter, cohesive thoughts.)

-How were you taught to read your Bible? What may be a new concept to you today about effective study and comprehension of it?

-Ask Questions

-What ideas or words here do I not understand?

-Idolater – this seems to have come out of the blue, why is it here?

-Greed – I know greed isn’t good, but how is it connected to idolatry?

-Why do they matter to the author’s point of imitating God by sacrificially loving like Jesus?

**Let’s break it down:**

### **Idolater/Idolatry**

**Idolatry** – attributing to anything other than God things that should only be attributed to God. Setting anything other than God in the place where only God should be set

**Idols** – images that represent some other thing. In the Bible these are most often seen as literal statues representing gods. Now we tend to think of “idols in our lives” meaning things that get in the way or take the place of God in our lives”.

**Core to both of these things though is the idea that you get to choose.** That we get to decide who or what we will be faithful to. We get to determine whether God is God or not. **And that idea itself is idolatry.**

-What does Greg mean by this statement?

### **Greed**

**Greed** – can be translated as covetousness.

**Covet** – yearn/need to possess.

-The first instance of this greed/coveting is in **Genesis 3:6 (AMP)**\_\_ “And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was delightful to look at, and **a tree to be desired in order to** make one wise and insightful, she took some of its fruit and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband with her, and he ate.”

- “In order that” translated means that Eve saw it was “a tree to be desired” **so that** she could possess what it offered. I can get something from it. I want to take it and own it.

-Interesting: the root of this actually means “beautiful” or “worthy of admiration, or “pleasant”.

### **Therefore: A Greedy Person is an Idolater**

God makes everything.

God makes people.

God pulls them aside and says, “Hey, love you. I’m giving EVERYTHING to you. Here’s what I need you to do – keep everything running smoothly, just stay away from the big tree.”

-So, Adam and Eve own EVERYTHING – **except** one tree and its fruit.

-And rather than let a beautiful thing be beautiful they needed to consume it, have it, gain what they imagined it offered.

**-In order to have it, they replaced the rule of God with the rule of desire, want, even lust.**

**-This is idolatry. This is to covet. This is the core idea of greed.**

-How do you see this in your world today? How do you see this personally in your own life?

**When we see something that is desirable instead of being able to appreciate what it is, we have some type of need to possess it. And because we are not God, we are not able to shoulder the burden of care of the thing we covet. What we want to possess, own, and consume now possess, owns, and consumes us.**

-This is a **POWERFUL** statement. What is Holy Spirit revealing to you through it?

**God doesn't want to stop your joy. He wants to stop your death.**

-What does this mean?

God says in **Exodus 20:3** "You must not have any other god but me." And then in **Exodus 20:17** "You must not covet your neighbor's house. You must not covet your neighbor's wife, male or female servant, ox or donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbor."

-Why do we tend to think of these as constricting, burdensome laws?

Church these are instructions on how to live free.

All else is idolatry. A type of idolatry characterized at such a deep level by ignorance and idiocy that it is almost unfixable.....**But God.**

-What hope do you hear in this message so far?

### **Summary so far:**

The greedy person cannot simply allow good things to exist.

He or she is compelled to have and consume them.

The desired thing becomes ruler over the one who desires it.

The desired thing becomes an idol.

It becomes a thing representing something that once may have been beautiful but was never meant to be worshipped.

**So, for these verses the fruit of the Spirit is overcome by the fruit of the world:**

Love is replaced by lust.

Joy replaced with insecurity.

Peace replaced by confusion.

Patience replaced with compulsions.

Kindness replaced by selfishness.

Goodness replaced by corruption.

Faithfulness replaced by fad.

Gentleness replaced by rudeness.

And Self-Control replaced by instability, profanity, and anger.

-Can you relate?

Read **Ephesians 5:3-5** again.

Specifically v4b **“Instead, let there be thankfulness to God.”**

### **What hope do we have?**

Paul is teaching here that the people of God are not meant to live from the scraps of dopamine tossed to us by impotent idols that we created.

-What does this mean? \*Consider doing a bit of research on dopamine and the body. It is fascinating in this context.

We were never designed to consume each other sexually. The source of our strength was never meant to be random encounters, part-time lovers, and certainly not 4K screens of other broken unclothed humans.

**Additionally, we were never meant to use the God-blown breath of life in our lungs to entertain ourselves and others as we diminish the beauty of intimacy. All in an effort to consume it with less shame and guilt.**

-These are sin in that what they offer is death all the while lying to us and telling us we don't have to feel the pain of the sin.

Paul is reminding us that while we live in this world of death – we do NOT belong to it!

In this chapter alone Paul reminds us:

-You are His (God's) dear children – 5:1

-You are God's people – 5:3

-You are capable of living a life filled with love - 5:2

-You are able to follow the sacrificial example of Jesus - 5:2

AND

-You are intended toward thankfulness – 5:4

**“Instead, let there be thankfulness to God.”**

The Message version states it this way, **“Thanksgiving is our dialect.”**

What if the language and dialect of the church were THANKSGIVING?!

Eugene Peterson - “Worship is the strategy by which we interrupt our preoccupation with ourselves and attend to the presence of God.”

-Preoccupation with ourselves: greed and idolatry

Thanksgiving flips the script.

-Thankfulness distracts us from our addiction of self. It changes where we focus.

-Desires and lust threaten to throw us off. Thankfulness changes our attitude and challenges us to REMEMBER. **Why does this matter? Why does this help?**

-Thankfulness is POWER. **How so?**

-Remember what God has done vs. what I imagine it might be if I get that thing I want.

-It uses words in ways that lift up, encourage, and build.

-It reminds us there is one God and Father of all to be thanked for life.

-It allows us to experience beauty and just let it be beautiful.

-It allows each and every one of us to move aside and let Jesus reign as king.

-What focus change you need in your life right now?

- What REAL things do you need to thank Him for?
- How does all of this speak to sexual immorality, coarse joking, greed, immoral behavior, impurity?
- What needs to change in your life in light of this passage of scripture?
- What practical study habit that Greg shares should you add to your bible reading habits?