



## LEADER'S GUIDE 9

### EPHESIANS 5:1-20

## Be Imitators of God or Living as Dearly Loved Children or Living as Children of Light

As you start this study, ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand what God has said through Paul.

This section continues the contrast between the old way of life as Gentiles and the new way of life as Christ's body, the church.

### DAY 1

Read Ephesians 5:1-20 three times.

1. Read verse 1. Who are we to imitate? In what way? Think of how a child imitates its parent. Explain how this helps you understand how to imitate God.

We are to imitate God.

*We read in Genesis 1:27, that at the time of creation, "God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him". The Fall damaged our relationship with God, but as believers in the atonement for our sins through the blood of Christ, God has promised to live within us, opening our eyes once again and enabling us to reflect His image to the world around us. Similarly in vs. 8, Paul says, "for you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord". A small child tries to walk in their parents footprints or shoes, makes the same faces, says the same words – tries hard, on purpose to be like their parent. They show us visually what our attitude should be to imitate God.*

2. In verse 2 we are to live or walk what? Who is our model to do this? How did He model this?  
We are to live a life of love. Christ is our model. Sacrificed His life.

*Paul tells us in Eph.4:32 that one way to imitate God is to have a forgiving spirit. The way to imitate our Lord is to act "just as" he did. The sacrificial way Jesus expressed his love for us is not only the means of salvation, but also an example of the way we are to live for the sake of others. The divine way is the way of self-giving love.*

*The words "and actually" should be "that is" – it conveys the idea that the believer is to imitate God by walking in love.*

3. What effect did Jesus death have on God?

It was a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God – it pleased God.

**TO DIG DEEPER:** In verse 2 the terms "fragrant offering" or "aroma" and "sacrifice" refer to sacrifices and offerings the Jews offered. Read Genesis 8:21; Exodus 29:18, 25, 41 and Leviticus 1:4, 13, and 17. What do you learn about these offerings? Now read Hebrews 7:27; 9:11-14 and 10:10, 12. Explain how Jesus Christ fulfills these sacrifices and offerings.

*"fragrant offering" literally is "for an odor of fragrance"*

*Genesis 8:21 – The sacrifice was a pleasing aroma to God; Exodus 29:18, 25, 41 – burnt offering was a pleasing aroma to God – the grain and drink offerings were included – see Leviticus 2:1; Leviticus 1:4, 13, 17 – the offerer lays hand on the head of the burnt offering and God will accept the offering on behalf of the one offering it – this offering was made by fire. On page 150 of the NIV Study Bible there is a chart of the offerings and explanations of each. Leaders may want to review this with class. In the Old Testament the offerings of sacrifice pleased the Lord so much that it was described as a pleasing aroma. (NIV footnote).*

*The passages in Hebrews tell that Jesus as High Priest sacrificed Himself once for all; by His own blood He cleanses us. Christ's sacrifice was once for all. The job is completed and He sat down at the right hand of God.*

## DAY 2

1. From verse 3 list three behaviors that Christians are not to participate in. Why?

Sexual immorality, any kind of impurity or greed. These are improper for God's holy people.

*These include any kind of excessive desire. Remember, Gentiles in the first century such behavior was rampant. In Athens, for example, a Temple to Aphrodite, the goddess of love, was built with the profits of prostitution. In Corinth, many of the temples were run by priestesses who were, in fact, sacred prostitutes. Cicero argued with great eloquence that young men should be allowed to visit prostitutes. It was the norm in those days for a man to have a mistress. (From Ephesians, Mastering the Basics by Lyman Coleman and Richard Peace*

*“sexual immorality/impurity” – these two words in the Greek cover all forms of promiscuous sexual behavior amongst married or unmarried people. The word “greed” literally is “insatiability”*

2. Paul says there should “not even be a hint” of these 3 behaviors. Another translation (New American Standard Version) says they should not “even be named among you”. Why do you think this is so important?

*Paul reminds Christians that among them there must not be even a hint of any kind of sexual immorality or greed or impurity. The modernism, “perception is reality” comes to mind when one considers the meaning of the word, “hint”. Perceptions or impressions of a person are based on their actions, their attitude, and their tongue. The mission of our new life in Christ “is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever; for from him and through him, and to him are all things” (Rom.11:36). Paul reminds Christians that the image of God can be seen – or tarnished - in all that we say and do. Even naming such sins in word and thought is harmful.*

3. Verse 4 mentions three forms of speech that should not be a part of a Christian's speech. What are they? Why should they not be spoken: What should be in place of them? Read Ephesians 4:15, 25, 29. What is the purpose of our speech?

Obscenity, foolish talk, and coarse joking. They are out of place. Instead, thanksgiving. The purpose of our speech is to speak truthfully, speak the truth in love, speak only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs.

*‘Obscenity, foolish talk, and coarse joking’ (v.s4) serve their place in providing a false sense of security and acceptance in our society. The ‘feel-good reward’, courtesy of the Prince of this world, is both instant and short-lived. It serves no other purpose than to support self-worship and detour us from the invitation to participate in a bigger picture; one in which our God and creator of the universe has a plan for us – and a good one - if only we will trust in Him (Jer.9:11). Improper language should have no place in the Christian's conversation because it*

*does not reflect God's gracious presence in us. The purpose of our speech is to "Give thanks in all circumstances. This is God's will for you in Jesus Christ". We praise God in everyday life as we live thankfully. Vulgar talk is out of place because it demeans God's good gift of sex which is a subject for thanksgiving and not joking. (Coleman and Peace) Improper language is a low frivolity which makes light of sin. All of these are expressions of an impure mind. (Charles Erdman) "You can be witty, but never cause a saint to groan or a virgin to blush." Frank Sells. "By being grateful for all that God has given us, we can displace evil thoughts and words." (NIV footnote).*

*TO THINK ABOUT: Does my "small talk" hinder me from giving thanks? Does it hinder someone else from giving thanks? (Frank Sells)*

4. In verse 5 what is the result of doing those things just mentioned in verses 3 and 4?

Immoral, impure and greedy persons have no inheritance in the kingdom of God.

*The greedy person wants things more than he wants God, and puts things in place of God, thereby committing idolatry. "If we should fall into a life of greedy immorality, we would be supplying clear evidence that we are after all idolators, not worshippers of God . . . and so heirs not of heaven, but of hell." (John R. Stott) The person who persists in sexual and other kinds of greed has excluded God, who therefore excludes them from the kingdom. (NIV footnote) Paul reminds us in 1Cor:11, "And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God". Paul writes against the lifestyle of people who make excuses for bad behavior!*

**TO DIG DEEPER:** If you have a Bible Dictionary, look up the definitions of the six behaviors named in verses 3 and 4. If you have a Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, a NIV Exhaustive Concordance or another complete concordance, look up each word and find the Greek word used in these verses and the definition of that word. Write the definitions down. How does this help you to better understand these verses?

**This is another principle of Inductive Bible Study** – to look up the word in one of the concordances listed above to find what the word was in the original language and it's meaning and use in the passage you are studying.

**Leaders may want to bring one of the above concordances to class and look up one of the words or phrases and let everyone see it.**

**Verses 1 and 2 urge living a life of love in contrast with verses 3 and 4 the life of lust they once knew.**

### DAY 3

1. In verse 6, what can deceive us? Who deceives us? Anyone can deceive us with empty words.

*In the secular world that Christians live in, we are not to participate in the sinful lifestyle of unbelievers. As indicated earlier in our study, this 'lifestyle' that we are not to participate in does not only refer to some of the more 'obvious sins', but includes the gamut of what we say, how we act, on a day-to-day basis. It is incongruous for the tongue that praises God on Sunday to swear with 'friends' at a sports play on Monday, or speak ill of someone at work. If we open our hearts to God (which we can ask Him to help us do if we find difficulty), then he can help us convert our thoughts & language to praise and thanksgiving – every day. Disconnecting from sinful thinking and actions that we may fall into from time to time in a secular world need not be viewed as an 'impossible task' but rather a blessed opportunity. The reward that God has promised is the sense of peace that we're all thirsty for. Remember Gal. 2:20, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me".*

*“empty words” in the Greek is kenos which means “void of content”. Christians should not be deceived into thinking that the warning in verses 5 and 6 is merely empty words. These words include all specious arguments and all false reasoning. The Gnostics taught (wrongly) that sins of the body did not matter and would not taint the soul.*

2. Verse 7 says not to be partners with those who are disobedient. Going back to verse 6, what is their fate?

God’s wrath.

*See Leader’s Guide 3, Day 3 and Question 2 as well as Ephesians 2:3; Romans 1:18 and Colossians 3:6*

Look up the word “partners” or “partakers” in a Bible Dictionary (a regular dictionary can be used if you do not have a Bible Dictionary). Write down the meaning. How would you explain this verse to another Christian? This word is from the Greek word *sumprameno* – to remain in company, to continue with.

*Christians, while living in normal social relationships with others, are not to participate in the sinful lifestyle of unbelievers. Paul is speaking against condoning the lifestyle of people who make excuses for bad behavior and recommend its practice to others, - whether they are in the church or outside of it. We must befriend unbelievers if we are to lead them to Christ, but we must be wary of those who are viciously evil, immoral, or against what Christianity stands for. Christians are no longer part of the darkness in which they used to live, they have been rescued out.*

3. Verse 8 says “you were once” or “formerly” darkness\_\_\_\_\_, “but now you are light\_\_\_\_\_.” How are we to live? As children of light – their very nature is spiritual light, so live accordingly. What are the fruit of the light in verse 9? Goodness, righteousness and truth

*“goodness” – kindness, beneficence or goodness in action*

*“righteousness” – uprightness or moral rectitude*

*“truth” – signifies honesty*

*These reflect God’s character in the believer’s life. Unbelievers – those in darkness – are characterized by the opposite – evil, wickedness, falsehood. (from Walvoord and Zuck) If we are now “light in the Lord” (vs.8), then not only have our lives been illumined by Him, but we become also the means of introducing that light into the dark areas of human conduct. (NIV footnote) Darkness represents that which is secret and evil and is out of touch with God’s purposes. Light stands for goodness and truth, and for obedience to God which issues in openness and transparency. (Coleman and Peace). They were so ignorant of God and His will, so identified with sin that they were darkness. Now, the truth of the gospel penetrated their souls and transfigured their lives that they are not only morally and spiritually illumined, but they are light. (Charles Erdman) In Matt.15, Jesus says, “let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven”.*

*Vs.9 is a mixed metaphor – light is productive and vital to plant life – and those who live in God’s light produce the fruit of moral and ethical character while those who live in darkness do not. Recall Gal. 5: 22-26, the fruit of the spirit “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the spirit, let’s keep in step with the spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying of each other”. As children of light, our actions should reflect our faith. We should live above reproach morally so that we can reflect God’s goodness to others. (New Living Translation) This phrase explains and enforces the command to “walk as children of light” (Charles Erdman).*

4. In verse 10 what else are we to do? Prove what is pleasing to the Lord.

*“PROVING” means finding out by experiment and experience; find out, put to the test, discern. See Romans 12:2 Literally it is “proving what pleases . . .” (Inductive Study Bible) How are we to “find what pleases the Lord”? While it doesn’t hurt to ask him – daily – he also has given us His Word to read and study and explore, and the blessing of fellowship with other Christians in which we help each other discern God’s will through the indwelling Holy Spirit who speaks to us through each of us, “where two or more are gathered”.*

#### DAY 4

1. In verse 11 what are we to do with the “fruitless or unfruitful deeds of darkness”? Why, according to verse 12? Verses 3-8 present deeds of darkness in contrast to verse 9 which presents fruit of light. Why do you think it is shameful or disgraceful to speak of these deeds of darkness? What effect can talking about these deeds have on yourself? On others?

We are to have nothing to do with the deeds of darkness. They are shameful.

*These practices the Christian is to not have any part of. They not only yield no profit or reward, they produce bitterness, disgrace and pain. They do not yield “the fruit of the light”, “goodness and righteousness and truth”. Verse 11 not only calls us to “have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness”, but to “expose them”. A Good Samaritan is not someone who walks by someone who is calling for help. For example, we may pat ourselves on the back for having the ‘strength’ to remain silent when someone speaks judgmentally of someone else, but we need to ask Christ at that moment, is silence good enough? Certainly we can imitate Christ by shunning evil deeds and activities, but when we find ourselves in a situation where someone is bragging about them, then is silence sufficient to ‘expose it for what it is’, or is a word or two in order. Paul instructs us to expose these deeds where silence may be interpreted as approval. These deeds here refer to the deeds of other believers who are not walking in the light. Only God can expose and convict unbelievers deeds (1 Corinthians 5:12-13). Believers can expose evil deeds among other Christians within the church. God needs people who will lovingly take a stand for what is right. The Holy Spirit can instantly guide us in these situations, provided that our hearts are open. There will be no confusion as to what pleases God if we communicate with Him daily.*

2. From verses 13 and 14 what is made visible by the light? Everything.

Read John 3:19-21 and write what Jesus taught about light and darkness.

*Light has come into the world (Jesus). Men love the darkness instead of the light – because their deeds are evil, thus they hate the light so their deeds won’t be exposed. Those who live by the truth come into the light – so what he has done will plainly be seen as done through God. Light, by nature, exposes what is in darkness and the contrast shows sin for what it really is. When these deeds are exposed by the light they are seen for what they really are. The believer then realizes they are detrimental to himself and other believers, and cleanses himself of them (1 John 1:5-7). (Walvoord and Zuck) The repetition of “everything . . . visible” seems that Paul is stressing the all-pervasive nature of the light of God and its inevitable effect. (NIV footnote).*

3. The quote in verse 14 is not directly from Scripture but probably from a hymn based on Scriptures. Read Isaiah 26:19; 51:17; 52:1; 60:1 and Malachi 4:2. From these verses and the context of Ephesians 5: 8-13, write out what this hymn is referring to.

*Paul was appealing to the Ephesians to wake up and realize the dangerous condition into which some of them had been slipping. Another way to say this is “Come out from those who are dead! Be separated enough to be free to reprove. John Stott said “Conversion is nothing*

*less than awakening out of sleep, rising from death and being brought out of darkness into the light of Christ.” Charles Erdman says ) If they will rouse themselves from their moral stupor and turn from their practices of shame, the glorious light which streams from the face of Christ will shine upon them, their souls will be illumined, they themselves will become “children of light”.*

## DAY 5

1. According to verses 15 and 16, what is involved in “being careful, then, how you live or walk”? Why should we be careful (see verse 16)?

Being wise, making the most of every opportunity. Because the days are evil.

*Verse 16 tells us that we should rather “make the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil”. “Being careful” literally is – “look carefully” (Inductive Study Bible) – Look therefore carefully how we walk. This is better rendered “Therefore look that you walk carefully” – from better Greek manuscripts.*

*“wisdom” is practical and not merely theoretical – will teach one how to live.*

*“make the most of every opportunity” literally “redeeming the time” or buy up the opportunity daily. (Frank Sells). Or, “to seize upon every fitting season for doing good, and to make their own every possible occasion for the fulfillment of duty” (Charles Erdman)*

*This contrasts to the existential mantra of *carpe diem* or seize the day because we only have one life to live. Since the Fall in Genesis, the days have been evil. 2 Pet.3:3,4 – “you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, ‘Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation’”. Yet 2 Pet.3:8 reminds us that “with the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day”. Paul however was communicating a sense of urgency because of evil’s pervasiveness. The foolish person has no strategy for life and misses opportunities to live for God in an evil environment. He also has a more fundamental problem: He does not understand what are God’s purposes for mankind and for Christians. As believers, we are not of this world, but we are blessed to be able to once again walk with our creator through the atonement of Christ’s blood. Rom.12:2 – “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will”. “Because the days are evil” – “this does not mean merely that the times are full of trouble and difficulty, but rather that they are morally corrupt.” (Charles Erdman)*

2. According to verse 17, instead of being foolish, what should we do? Understand what God’s will is.  
In verse 18, what should we not do, and what should we do instead? Not get drunk, but be filled with the Spirit.

*Drunkenness, intoxication leads to debauchery – riot, every form of excess, senselessness. All these give the idea of profligate or licentious living that is wasteful and not controlling oneself. (Walvoord and Zuck)*

3. From verses 19 and 20 what results when we are being filled with the Holy Spirit? We speak to one another with Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, make music in our hearts, always giving thanks to God for everything. Note the verb “be filled” is a present tense verb signifying continuous action – or “go on being filled”. It is a command – we are to continue letting the Spirit fill us.

*Throughout the bible, the Holy Spirit is referred to corporately, inspirationally, and personally. 1 Cor.6:19 – “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?” When we are crucified with Christ (Rom.6:6), we are given a helper - the Holy Spirit – who is Christ in us. We still have command of our thoughts and actions, and can choose to have ‘lockdowns’ where we ignore God’s spirit within us. To be ‘filled with the spirit’ each day is a blessing that we must humble ourselves and open our hearts to. Shutting out the spirit is to concede that we do not believe that God is in charge and has a plan for us, admitting that at that moment we do not trust Him. This can happen during prideful moments or times of intense challenge in our lives. Both require humility to thank God for the strength He is giving us and the grace of His holy plan for us. Finally, to comprehend, accept, and enjoy God’s gift of peace, we must remain centered in the Spirit. Rather than searching for God’s will in our lives at some abstract level, we should consider seeking hard after the Spirit’s leading each day of our lives. “Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God” Rom.8:14.*

*“be filled” seems to describe a state in which one is under the control of the spirit of Christ and impelled and empowered to do his will (see the book of Acts). It is the normal state of every believer – not a mystical experience. It is surrender to Christ. It can be developed and sustained by prayer, appropriating truth, fellowship with believers. (Charles Erdman). Christians are to express themselves in their social fellowship by speaking to one another in the language of devotion and praise. (Charles Erdman) It may be more accurate to say the Holy spirit is the “Agent” of the filling (Galatians 5:16) and Christ the content of the filling (Colossians 3:15) – (Walvoord and Zuck) “in all things” – not necessarily imply hardships, sorrows and distress, but for God’s mercy, grace and riches in Christ, blessings bestowed on us in Christ. (Charles Erdman)*

## DAY 6

Read again Ephesians 5:1-20. Reflect on these questions:

Am I imitating God?

Am I living a life of self-giving love like Jesus?

Do I participate in any behaviors or speech that are improper or out of place for God’s people?

Does my life consist of the fruit of light?

Do I make the most of every opportunity?

Am I letting the Spirit fill me daily?

What do I need to do to align my life with what these verses say?

*Col.3:12 “As God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience”.*

*John 14:23 “Jesus replied, ‘If any loves me, he will obey my teaching. My father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him”*

*Deut. 30:20 “Love the Lord your God, listen to His voice, and hold fast to Him, for the Lord is your life”.*

Now spend time in prayer – confess your failings, yield yourself to God’s will for your life as expressed in this passage, and give thanks to God for the Holy Spirit, and ask for His filling daily.