

EPHESIANS

WHO I AM AND WHY IT MATTERS

Similar to last week, today's passage in Ephesians is challenging. Today Paul will call us to something that isn't easy. Specifically, in today's passage, we're called to be people who live lives full of love and light. As those dearly loved by God and transformed by His love, we should, in turn, be people marked by love.

Scripture: Ephesians 5:1-16

Discussion Questions:

1. Looking back at your sermon notes, what encouraged or challenged you the most?
2. In verse 1, Paul calls us, as followers of Christ, to imitate God in everything we do. How often do you measure your words, thoughts, and actions by this calling? How are we tempted to limit the scope of this calling in our lives?

Living intentionally as imitators of God begins by living with the awareness of God's presence in our lives every day. Otherwise, we move through our days with our agendas and such speed that our lives are lived reactively rather than intentionally and thoughtfully. We're often tempted to limit the scope of discipleship to church attendance and not living as "others" we judge. In the New Testament, we're called to offer our lives as living sacrifices – not in part – but in whole.

3. In light of our calling to imitate God, Paul points us toward Christ. Why is Christ the best example to follow to imitate God (John 14:9-11)? What does Paul specifically highlight about the life of Christ? List some examples from the life of Jesus where we see Him demonstrate love to others.

John 14:9-11, "Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves."

Paul specifically points to the virtue of love when pointing us to live as Christ and imitating God. Every page of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John's gospel accounts shows Jesus living a life of love and calling His disciples to do the same. In the gospels, we see Jesus demonstrate compassion, kindness, mercy, patience, etc.

4. What would it look like for you to live a life filled with love in the workplace, at home, in the church, etc.? Why is this such a challenge at times? What can we do to position our hearts best to live a life filled with love (in real life every day)? List some examples of what it would look like to choose love instead of unrighteous anger, jealousy, or revenge in your daily life as you interact with others.

If we're going to live a life of love in the workplace, at home, in the church, and everywhere else our feet stand, we have to cultivate a heart of love. After all, what comes out of the mouth comes first from the heart. We develop a heart of love by prioritizing unhurried time in the presence of God each day in prayer and meditation on God's Word.

5. In verses 3-9, Paul says that we shouldn't make any room in our lives for sexual immorality, impurity, obscene stories, foolish talk, coarse jokes, or greed. How can these sins so easily creep into our lives?

More than ever, it seems like we're tempted to "look the other way" in many of our entertainment choices. We regularly face the temptation to lower our standards of acceptable entertainment choices. We live with FOMO (fear of missing out) when it comes to conversations around various hot topics of the day. We rarely consider how lowering our standards impact our hearts and minds, which leads to words and actions that do not reflect a life of imitating God.

6. What does the world say about each of the sinful behaviors mentioned above? What does the Bible say these behaviors bring into our lives? Why do you think Paul contrasts these various sinful behaviors with thankfulness to God? How can thankfulness steer us in the direction of light rather than darkness?

Every choice we make regarding our words, actions, or thoughts leads us toward heaven or hell – light or darkness. When our lives are peppered with obscene or foolish talk, coarse jokes, and various kinds of impurity, our actions reveal heart attitudes that do not honor God. The more our lives are peppered with these words and actions, the further our heart drifts away from God. Therefore, Paul tells us to practice thankfulness. When cultivating a thankful heart, we move toward God and away from things that darken our heart attitude.

7. In verses 10-16, Paul calls us to make careful determinations about our lives when it comes to pleasing the Lord. What does the word "carefully" imply? Why does Paul say, "take no part" in worthless deeds of evil? What makes a deed worthless or evil? On the other hand, what makes a deed good?

Generally speaking, we're in too much of a hurry these days, which results in living more haphazardly rather than carefully with intentionality. Therefore, we don't pay as much attention to what we should be paying attention to, like the influences of our hearts and mind.

At every turn in today's passage, we see Paul pushing us toward a life of love rather than dabbling in matters that cultivate darkness and lead us down a path away from God – away from love. We're so tempted to dabble, aren't we?

8. What's one personal takeaway from today's study you can focus on applying in your life this week?