

STUDY NINE | EPHESIANS 5:3-20

REGENERATE

Having described the pattern of repentance in the Christian life (4:17-5:2), Paul continues to address particular ways the lives of God's redeemed people are 'holy' and how this works out in the ways they relate to one another ('among you', v 3; cf. vv 18-20).

1. 'Do not be partners with them' (vv 3-7)

Since Christ, the spotless lamb, has offered up himself on the cross for the sake of his people (5:2), they are in turn to live in accordance with their new status before God. This means not partaking in the sexually immoral ways of the world; not even a little (v 3). Not only in acts but in words (v 4). Thanksgiving is evidently the antidote for sexual immorality as it focusses a person on God's good gifts, rather than pervert them. Paul, surprisingly for us, motivates through concern for negative consequences, as opposed to anticipation of positive ones. He's deadly serious about the consequences of sexual immorality, whether in speech or lifestyle. In fact, a person who has been transformed by God won't continue participating in such things. These are matters in which we are easily led astray, so Paul warns us, 'Do not be deceived' (v 6).

2. 'Now you are light in the Lord' (vv 7-14)

A person's identity is the foundation for their way of life. Our actions do not make us Christian. So Paul reiterates the redemption God has brought about in the Ephesian Christians' lives, in terms of darkness to light (vv 8-9). The 'old way' is darkness (v 8), disobedience (v 12), and leads to death (2:1). The 'new way' is light (v 8b-10) and life-giving (v 14). In other words, a person who has been transformed by God has a fundamentally different approach to wickedness. Rather than participation and cover up, they disassociate and expose (vv 11-13). This evidently has an illuminating effect on others. Once darkness, now being made light, God's holy people are given the ability to shine this light onto the lives of others. This doesn't give believers permission to rebuke unbelievers, however, because Paul is talking about how the Ephesian believers are to relate to one another ('among you', v 3).

A NEW HUMANITY

APRIL 25

EPHESIANS 1:1-14 REDEEMED

MAY 2

EPHESIANS 1:15-23 RESURRECTED

MAY 9

EPHESIANS 2:1-10 RESTORED

MAY 16

EPHESIANS 2:11-22 RECONCILED

MAY 23

EPHESIANS 3:1-13 REVEALED

MAY 30

EPHESIANS 3:14-21 RENEWED

JUNE 6

EPHESIANS 4:1-16 REBUILT

JUNE 13

EPHESIANS 4:17-5:2 REPENTANT

JUNE 20

EPHESIANS 5:3-20 REGENERATE

RESOURCE



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(GOD'S WORD FOR YOU SERIES)

3. The way of wisdom (vv 15-20)

This leads Paul to warn the Ephesian church to 'be very careful, then, how you live' (v 15). The way of wisdom is to exercise caution. 'Making the most of every opportunity' to do what, in v 16? To 'live as children of the light' (v 8), to 'find out what pleases the Lord' (v 10), to have 'nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather to expose them' (v 11). Why? 'Because the days are evil', that is, they are characterised by fruitless wickedness, we are easily led astray, and evil will one day give way to light, goodness and righteousness in the new creation. To 'understand what the Lord's will is', does not refer to working out God's plan for your life, but learning 'the way of love' and wisdom that is revealed in the person of Jesus throughout the pages of Scripture in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Christian seeks the ongoing filling of the Spirit, even though he has already been given (1:14), not because we are lacking in salvation (1:3), but because it shapes a life characterised by praise and thanksgiving, to the glory of God (5:18-20).

GETTING STARTED

1. What do you think it looks like for a gathering of Christians to be holy?

***Link:** In this passage, the apostle Paul writes about the Christian life being one characterised by holiness. He shows us why Christians ought to desire holiness, by describing the dangers it avoids as well as the pleasures to be enjoyed by its fruits*

INTO THE TEXT

READ EPHESIANS 5:3-7

1. What do you think it means for there not to be ‘even a hint’ of sexual immorality, impurity or greed among God’s people?
2. What motivation does Paul give in vv 5-6?
3. Who do you think the ‘them’ is in v 7? Why do you think believers might be tempted to partner with such people?

READ EPHESIANS 5:8-14

4. How does reading that we’re ‘children of light’ make you feel (vv 8-9)?
5. What do you think it looks like to ‘expose the fruitless deeds of darkness’ (v11)?
6. ‘True holiness is contagious.’ Discuss, in the light of vv 13-14.

READ EPHESIANS 5:15-20

7. How does a person exercise wise caution (v 15) while ‘making the most of every opportunity’ (v 16; cf. v 17)?

8. Why do you think Paul contrasts getting drunk on wine with being filled with the Spirit (vv 18-19)

9. Thankfulness is twice given as the positive characteristic of holy and wise Christian character (vv 4, 20). Why do you think this is?

TAKEAWAY

1. Discuss what ways our formal and informal gatherings embody Paul's description of Christian holiness in these verses. What areas do we need to continue to grow as God's people in our collective holiness?

2. How does this passage help a Christian approach rebuking a fellow believer i.e., what should they pray for, look for, hope for and do?