

# Journey To A Better Life

## Lesson 10 . . . Knowing Real Love (Ephesians 5:1-17)

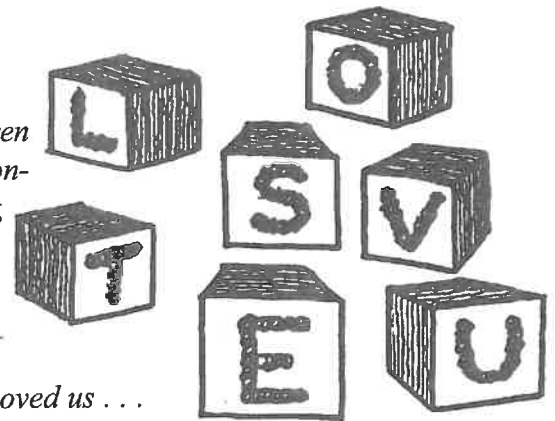
Notes

**T**he book of Ephesians was written to Christians who had come from a notoriously immoral and sinful culture. For example, Ephesus was a wicked metropolis, whose main religion was the worship of the multi-breasted goddess Diana. Hundreds of temple prostitutes served as worshipers indulged in rituals of sexual immorality. Ephesus' worship of sex is no different from Dallas, Tokyo, Moscow, Manila, or Hong Kong.

Nothing has impacted sexual morality and the word *love* like the New Testament. There are three things in this passage to help us understand real love.

### First, The Character of Real Love (5:1-2)

Paul writes: *Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children* (5:1). If we are *imitators of God* we will be *kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other* (4:32) because according to 1 John 4:16, what is God?



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To imitate God, we must . . . *live a life of love, just as Christ loved us . . .* (Eph. 5:2a). The word *love* causes most people to think of “romantic” love. To the world love is raging hormones and infatuation. As Jerry Lee Lewis sang, “You shake my nerves and rattle my brain. Too much love drives a man insane. You broke my will; Oh, what a thrill! Goodness, gracious, great balls of fire!” But the word translated *love* (*AGAPE*) in the NT is not berserk emotions; it is a selfless love that loves the unlovely.

*AGAPE* love is sacrificial, and we know Christ loved us because *he gave himself up for us* (5:2b). If someone wants you to compromise your sexual morals, that isn't love; it is raging hormones. People that love you will always seek to raise your moral standards, not lower them.

*AGAPE* love loves the unlovely and always seeks the welfare of others, even at great personal expense. How does Romans 5:8 describe this kind of love?

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Describing Christ's death *as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God* (Eph. 5:2b) shows it was for our benefit. Real love always wants to give, not take. Not only do we need to know the **character of real love**, but . . .

## **Second, The Counterfeit of Real Love (5:3-7)**

Satan always offers a counterfeit to pervert what is good and holy. To make sure we don't confuse real love with Satan's counterfeit, the Bible says: *But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality* (5:3a). The word translated *sexual immorality* (*PORENIA*), also translated "fornication," is the word from which we get our English word "pornography." It means "illicit sexual intercourse" or any sex outside the marriage of a man and a woman committed to each other for life. The Gentile world of Paul's day saw nothing wrong with prostitution, infidelity in marriage, or homosexuality, but what ominous warning does the Bible give us in 1 Corinthians 10:8?

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Though the movies and media glamorize and sensationalize sexual immorality, it is a serious sin because it perverts God's purpose for sex. God isn't against sex. He thought it all up for our enjoyment, fulfillment, and bringing children into the world to have a home where they will be loved and considered gifts from God. Satan's counterfeit results in venereal disease, AIDS, unwanted children, abortion, and young girls and boys with damaged lives.

We are to abstain from *any kind of impurity* (*AKATHARSIA*) (5:3b), which refers to dirty thoughts, desires, and deeds. This includes dirty movies or magazines and can refer to nudity, orgies, and the viewing of such things. *Greed* (*PLEONEXIA*) in this context refers to a desire to gratify lust, regardless of the damage it does to others. This kind of conduct is *improper for God's holy people* (5:3).

Divinely inspired, Paul continues, *Nor should there be obscenity* (*AISCHROTES*) (5:4), which means indecent talk and includes dirty stories or jokes and gestures. Our culture makes such talk socially acceptable by making it funny. One of the most accurate tests of our character is what makes us laugh. God isn't against humor, for what does He tell us in Proverbs 17:22a?

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Studies have shown that laughter produces endorphins in your brain that make you feel good. It also reduces stress and strengthens your immune system. Laughter is God's gift for good health. God has a sense of humor or He wouldn't have made you!

*Foolish talk (MOROLOGIA)* (Eph. 5:4) refers to stupid chatter, like that of a drunk. This often leads to *coarse joking (EUTRAPELIA)*, which means "an easy turn of speech" and refers to the person who is able to turn a decent, clean conversation into something obscene and vulgar. It is dirty wit. These things *are out of place* for Christians because instead of having behavior that insults God and His Holy Word, we should lead lives of *thanksgiving* (5:4).

Verses 5-7 are sobering words for those who persistently commit these sins: *For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them.* Unrepentant people who have an idolatrous obsession with sex and who pervert God's design for sex will not be in heaven. How does God's Word reiterate this truth in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10?

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We need to know the **character of real love, the counterfeit of real love,** and . . .

### **Third, The Contrast Between Real and Counterfeit Love (5:8-17)**

Contrasting our past and present Paul writes: *For you were once darkness* (5:8a). Formerly, all of us were not only living in *darkness*, we were a part of it, *but now, we are light in the Lord* (5:8b). We have a tremendous responsibility to the world to *live as children of light* (5:8c). How do we do that? The Bible tells us in a parenthetical statement in verse 9: *(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)*. *Goodness (AGATHOSUNE)* signifies moral excellence, *righteousness (DIKAIOSUNE)* is the quality of being right or just in our actions, and *truth (ALETHEIA)* means genuine as opposed to artificial or hypocritical. Being the children of light and producing the fruit *of the light—truth—*means we live by the Bible. Why, according to Jesus in John 17:17?

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As believers we are to *find out what pleases the Lord* (Eph. 5:10), and that is why God gave us the Bible, which is His Word in written form.

As Christians we are to *have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them* (5:11). The *deeds* are to be shunned, not the doers. This is becoming more difficult because if we as Christians make moral judgments and condemn sexual immorality we are said to be intolerant, bigots, gay-bashers, or suffering from homophobia. As Christians we should never be guilty of gay-bashing, nor should we be guilty of not *speaking the truth in love* (4:15). It is love not hate that tells someone when their actions are harmful to their spiritual health or destiny. How does James 5:20 express this truth?

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The problem is, we can't please God and fail to *expose* what His Word declares is sin. When we do and are labeled moral dinosaurs, intolerant, or bigots, we need to remember what promise of Jesus in Matthew 5:11-12?

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Ephesians 5:12 makes it clear that the exposure of *the fruitless deeds of darkness* is not to be verbal, *for it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret*. How then are we to expose them? Verses 13-14 tell us: *But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."* The world of *darkness* doesn't need to hear about the *light*; they need to see.

In order to do this, Paul writes, *Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise* (5:15). The word *careful* (*AKRIBOS*) is translated "circumspectly" in the KJV and means carefully or accurately. It is the idea of looking around, giving attention to all circumstances to avoid sin. I grew up on a small farm outside Caddo, Oklahoma, where in the winter I helped feed cattle. Walking among those cattle was how I first learned to walk "circumspectly."

We are to let our lights shine, *making the most of every opportunity* (5:16a). We must make *the most of every opportunity* at home, work, school, civic functions, etc. to let our lights shine, *because the days are evil* (*PONERAI*)

(5:16b), or wicked in a moral sense. If we don't let our light shine, Satan will drag unsuspecting victims farther into his moral darkness to their eternal ruin.

The command *do not be foolish* (5:17a) tells us to do things that are productive and helpful, not counter productive and harmful. We can only do this if we *understand what the Lord's will is* (5:17b). How can we *understand* God's will? By realizing His moral will is revealed in the Bible in the form of commands. What example of this do we find in 1 Thessalonians 4:3?

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As we are faithful to God's clear commands in the Bible, He will reveal more of His will to us through circumstances, the counsel of other believers, and spiritual impressions. As someone has said, "The way to see far ahead in the will of God is to go as far ahead as you can see."

Obedying God's Word in the area of sexual behavior is essential if one is to have a "journey to a better life." This is also the only way to experience God's real love and let it flow through our lives.

How can you know the difference between real love and counterfeit love in your heart this week?

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