



UPSTATE GROUP GUIDE

Fully Alive: Ephesians

May 18-24

Ephesians 5:1-21

Things to Know

See Other Sermons Here

[Click Here to Watch](#)

Gospel Connections and Conversations

[Click Here to report your Gospel Connections & Conversations](#)

Studying God's Word *In Community*

Reminder: The goal of group time is not to re-preach the sermon, but to understand and apply God's Word together.

Sermon Recap

Ephesians 5:1-21 calls us to imitate God by walking in love, living as children of light, and pursuing wisdom through the Spirit. God's love is not permissive—it transforms us, calling us out of darkness and into a new way of living. As we are filled with the Spirit, our lives begin to reflect worship, gratitude, and humility, showing the world what it looks like to follow Jesus.

Read

Read Ephesians 5:1-21 and make observations about the text.

- What is God teaching us in the passage?
 - What does this reveal about who God is, what God has done, and how I should respond?
 - Which part of the text was most meaningful to you and why?
 - What do you need help understanding about this passage?
-

Scripture

Ephesians 5:1-21

Walk in Love

[1] Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. [2] And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

[3] But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. [4] Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. [5] For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. [6] Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. [7] Therefore do not become partners with them; [8] for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light [9] (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), [10] and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. [11] Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. [12] For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. [13] But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, [14] for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

“Awake, O sleeper,
and arise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.”

[15] Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, [16] making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. [17] Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. [18] And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, [19] addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, [20] giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, [21] submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. (ESV)

[The Holy Bible, English Standard Version](#). ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Ephesians 5:1-21.

Living on Mission In Community

Living on mission as a group means reflecting the light of Christ in a world that is often marked by darkness. Ephesians 5 reminds us that our lives are meant to stand out, not through self-righteousness, but through love, holiness, and wisdom. As a group, this means we encourage one another to live differently, to resist cultural pressures, and to pursue what pleases the Lord. We shine light by how we speak, how we love, and how we live, helping others see the difference Christ makes. When we walk in the Spirit together, our lives become a testimony that points people to Jesus.

How is God leading me to respond to His Word this week?

Optional Breakout Questions

Consider making time at the end of the group to break out into groups of 2-4 (keep them gender specific). Have them answer these three questions about their weeks:

1. How did you feed yourself?
 - *(What have you been doing to feed your spiritual life, and how is it going?)*
2. How did you feed others?
 - *(How did you share the gospel or gospel truth with someone this week?)*
3. How did you feed your flesh?
 - *(What sins did you struggle with this week? How can your friends hold you accountable?)*

Leader Resources - May 18-24

Small Group Curriculum - Ephesians 5:1-21

1. Session Overview

In Ephesians 5:1-21, Paul continues to unpack what it means to walk in a manner worthy of our calling by calling believers to imitate God. This imitation is not abstract. Instead, it is clearly seen in the life of Jesus, who loved sacrificially and lived in perfect holiness. Paul immediately contrasts this Christlike love with the patterns of the world, showing that true love is not permissive but transformative. It leads believers away from sin and toward a life that reflects God's character.

Paul then shifts to the imagery of light and darkness, reminding believers that they are no longer in darkness but are now children of light. This new identity calls for a new way of living; one that exposes sin rather than participates in it. Finally, Paul calls believers to walk wisely, making the most of their time and living under the influence of the Holy Spirit. A Spirit-filled life is marked by worship, gratitude, and humility in relationships. Altogether, this passage shows that the Christian life is not passive; it is a daily, intentional walk shaped by love, light, and wisdom.

2. Opening

Prayer:

Father, help us to imitate You in the way we live. Teach us to love like Jesus—sacrificially, truthfully, and consistently. In Christ's name, amen.

Icebreaker question:

Ask:

What influences your decisions the most on a daily basis? Your schedule, your emotions, or something else?

“What do you think it looks like to imitate God in everyday life?”

3. Scripture Reading

Have someone read Ephesians 5:1-211 out loud.

4. Teaching Points (Systematic Walkthrough)

Ephesians 5:1-2

In verses 1-2, Paul begins with a clear command: believers are to imitate God as beloved children by walking in love. This love is not defined by culture or personal preference, but by Christ Himself, who gave Himself up for us as a sacrificial offering. This means biblical love is costly, intentional, and rooted in truth. It is not about affirming every desire, but about reflecting God’s holiness and goodness in the way we live and relate to others.

Ephesians 5:3-7

In verses 3-7, Paul clarifies that this kind of love is incompatible with sin. He warns against sexual immorality, impurity, greed, and careless speech, making it clear that these behaviors do not belong to those who are part of God’s kingdom. This reinforces the truth that God’s love does not give permission to sin—it calls us out of it. Believers are not to be deceived by cultural messages that normalize or celebrate sin, but instead are to live in a way that honors God’s standards.

Ephesians 5:8-14

In verses 8-14, Paul reminds believers of their new identity: they were once darkness, but now they are light in the Lord. Because of this, they are called to walk as children of light, producing fruit that reflects goodness, righteousness, and truth. Rather than participating in the works of darkness, believers are to expose them. This doesn’t mean harsh judgment, but living in such a way that the light of Christ reveals what is true and leads others toward transformation. The call to “wake up” is a call to spiritual awareness and intentional living.

Ephesians 5:15-21

Finally, in verses 15-21, Paul calls believers to walk wisely, recognizing that the days are evil and that time is valuable. Wisdom is seen in understanding the Lord’s will and living accordingly. This culminates in the command to be filled with the Spirit, in contrast to being controlled by anything else. A Spirit-filled life is evident through worship, gratitude, and mutual submission among believers. This shows that the Christian life is not driven by external rules, but by the internal work of the Spirit producing a life that reflects God’s presence and glory.

5. Discussion Questions

1. What stands out to you most in Ephesians 5:1-21?
2. What stands out to you about what it means to “walk in love” according to this passage?
3. Why is it important to understand that God’s love is not permissive?
4. What does it look like practically to “walk as children of light” in today’s culture?
5. How can we expose darkness without becoming harsh or judgmental?
6. What do you think it means to be “filled with the Spirit” in everyday life?

6. Application

This week, identify one area where you need to walk more intentionally—whether in love, holiness, or wisdom. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you and take one concrete step to live differently in that area.

7. Closing Prayer

Prayer:

“Father, let our lives shine in a way that points others to You. Help us to walk in love, light, and wisdom for Your glory. Amen.”

8. Memory Verse

“And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

Ephesians 5:2

