

LIFE GROUP LESSON

Hot Topics-Studying Ephesians - Week of October 4

Introduction

What about L * G * B * T * Q?

Several years ago, Charles and I gathered with about fifteen of his fellow alumni council team, who were meeting at a thriving, Christ-centered seminary in Bangalore, India. This seminary was like an oasis amid a country that is hostile toward Christians in certain regions. Thus, we traveled as a group, and on one of the days, our host, who was also a professor at the seminary, took us offsite to an 'underground' type church. The pastor and wife of this church felt an earnest call of God to minister to a specific group of individuals. Their heart was to reach transgender men who had been sex trafficked since childhood. On the front lines in dark places, the church had become a safe haven for men coming to faith in Christ and experiencing freedom through a saving relationship with the Lord Jesus.

As we listened to their stories, we learned that most of these men had been taken as orphans-on-the-streets and made into male prostitutes. Many of them had been castrated as children and made to wear girls' clothing. The raw and complicated testimonies of these young men reminded me that Jesus Christ has the power to reach anyone right where they are ... even if it is in the middle of horrific pain and darkness. The joy of their authentic new relationship with Christ could be heard in their voices as we all closed in worship together. As we returned to the seminary later that evening, I recall thinking, "Everyone has a story" and this verse came to mind:

"There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you" (Galatians 3:28-29).

Background

God's design points to the fact that each of us is created in the Imago Dei, the very image of the living God. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1), and on the sixth day: "... God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27). There is a reason God created a helpmate for Adam. The backstory is found in Genesis, chapter two: "But still there was no helper just right

for him. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the LORD God took out one of the man's ribs and closed up the opening. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man. 'At last!' the man exclaimed. 'This one is bone from my bone, and flesh from my flesh! She will be called, 'woman' because she was taken from 'man'!"

"This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one" (Genesis 2:21-24).

In Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus, he speaks of God's love and power to forgive each of us from our former lives of sin. Paul urges: "Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children" (Ephesians 5:1). When we invite Jesus into our hearts, and confess our need for a Savior, Christ himself brings us out of darkness and into the light of his love. Faith is a journey, for sure. And though sin separates us from God and others, Jesus reconnects us to our heavenly Father so we may reclaim our identity as his child and experience first-hand the intimacy of his love.

Read Ephesians 5:1-20

As we trust in Jesus, we will begin to 'Imitate God' in everything we do because we are his dear children' (v1). This means we receive the gift of his forgiveness. As a result, we must forgive ourselves and others.

- Do you have a hard time receiving the Lord's forgiveness?
- Do you have a hard time in forgiving yourself?
- What must we understand about forgiving others as we have been forgiven?

Evil is a parasite of good. However, by naming our sin and exposing it to the light of Christ, we are then empowered to renounce that sin. It is time to "Awake, O sleeper" ... rise from places of death ... "and Christ will give you light" (v14). We are not called to live in dark places of isolation, but to be in community with other brothers and sisters who share the journey of hope and redemption. Many of us, at some point of loneliness or searching for a place to belong, have fallen prey to sin ... maybe not sexual sin ... but sin. And sin separates us from God and one another.

The apostle Paul speaks to sexual sin in 1 Corinthians 6:9-20. There are Scriptures that speak to the darkness of homosexuality: Leviticus 18:22, 20:13; Romans 1:26-28. And referring to God's design, Jesus said, "Haven't you read the Scriptures? ... They record that from the beginning 'God made them male and female.' And he said, 'This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.' Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together" (Matthew 19:4-6).

If you or someone you know is in entangled in the deception of sin, perhaps the first question to ask, is the very question Jesus asks the man at the Pool of Bethesda, “Would you like to get well?” (John 5:6).

- Is there a sin in your life robbing you of an intimate relationship with the Lord?
- What sin is keeping you from enjoying community with other believers?
- What is robbing you of God's blessings? Take authority in your life and declare Ephesians 5:14 over you, your friends, your family (see also Matthew 21:21-22)

Read Ephesians 5:21-33

It's out of reverence for Christ first, that we are free to willfully and joyfully submit to one another, according to v21. Paul explains this in vv22-30, and in the remaining verses, he refers to God's design, quoting Genesis 2:24 and Jesus' words in Matthew 19:5. God loves each one of us. And because he loves us, the Lord crowns us with intrinsic value and sacred worth. We must never allow the culture to define us by our sexuality. We are SO much more than our sexuality.

You and I are physical and spiritual beings with a mind that thinks and reasons; a spirit that is filled with the very ruach (breath) of the living God, created to enjoy a relationship with God, others, and the beauty of creation; and a body, created to move and enjoy the life God gives us, a body that 'houses' the soul, the deep place where we long to love and be loved.

Ways to Respond

- Give the Lord first place in your life. He alone is worthy of that priority. Worship him first thing in the morning. Pray. Tell the Lord what you need; say, I would like to get well. Lord, will you help me? Show me the path as I walk out of darkness.
- Do you feel 'enslaved' by a sin? Ask the Lord to set you free and mean it. Do your part. Show the Lord you are serious by being practical in your day-today-response. Read/study Scripture. Declare Ephesians 5:14 to rise, renounce lies and deception that lead to death, and say to yourself: “Christ will give you light!” Believe it. Live it.
- Ask the Lord to guide you to new people, places, and things. New habits, routines, go-to locations where you find new friends that share the journey of faith in Christ. You may also declare Isaiah 52:1-2, claiming your new citizenship in Zion, Jerusalem, Holy City. You are a part of God's restorative work in the world around you.
- Join a Life Group, and/or a 12-Step group, seek a sponsor, go to meetings.

HOT TOPICS

STUDYING THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

Text: Ephesians 5

Plain Truth:

Claiming that we are _____ in
God's _____, and loved
_____, shapes our
_____ with Christ and
our sexual _____.

1. God's grace gives us the _____ between good and evil.
2. Allow grace to _____ us of God's _____ and _____ us of any _____ behavior which robs us of God's blessings.
3. God's grace calls us to _____ to God and _____ ourselves to His _____.

Recommended Reading:

Preventing Homosexuality in Your Children (Joseph Nicolosi), Holy Sexuality and the Gospel (Christopher Yuan), Strange New World (Carl R. Truman)

October 4, 2026