

Studying the Letter to the Ephesians

Ephesians is about learning to let who we are in Christ, shape how we perform in life.

Ephesians Study 9 (⊕ 45 min.)



Warm Up (⊕ 4 min.)

1. Greeting / Welcome

2. Prayer Requests (try to balance the amount of time between prayer and / or testimony by limiting the amount of prayer requests and/or time for testimony sharing.)

3. Testimony Sharing (*Optional* - prior to the group study time, ask one person to share for 3-5 minutes on how the recent truths being studied have impacted their life. Remember: *authenticity is the key* - What have you (or a group member you've asked to testify) shared lately that gives insight into your journey? Try to share things pertaining to the recent themes of the study.)



Overview of Today's Study (⊕ 1 min.)

Text: Turn to Eph. 5:1-21

Lesson Title: *Under the Influence*

Lesson Theme: The more Christians choose to allow their thoughts, words and actions to example the truth, there is less opportunity for worldly behavior.

By the End of the Study today, we want to be able to answer:

Today's Key Question

 1

How do Christians consistently live under the influence of the Holy Spirit?

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1. **Connecting the Studies** (⊕ 7 min.)

In chapter 4 of Ephesians we began to study the process of adjusting our behavior to match the holiness of our born again spirits.

In the first two thirds of chapter 5, we will study how to allow holy behavior to prevail or be the dominate characteristic of our lives in Christ here and now.

2. **Bible Passage Study** (⊕ 15 min.)

Read Eph. 5:1-21



Study Topic 1 – Following God’s Example

Paul Instructs the Ephesians to Imitate God as Children Follow the Example of Their Parents. Eph. 5:1-2

A. What do these verses tell us? 5:1-2

1. Paul wants the Ephesians to copy the example of God.
2. The chief characteristic that was exemplified by Christ is love.
3. Christ showed His love in the most dramatic way possible, He gave up His own life.

B. What do these verses mean? 5:1-2

1. The main thing that should identify a follower of Christ is the sacrificial love that is shown to people around them.

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2. In Phil. 2:5-8, Paul describes this kind of love as a mindset that Christians should adopt.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

C. How should these verses impact my life? 5:1-2



1. We like to think we are “our own person”. In reality, we all are following somebody’s **example** or have adopted somebody’s **mindset**.

2. If I am not sure of whether or not I am holding to Christ’s mindset, I can check my behavior. My actions can reveal the real motivation behind what I do.

a. When was the last time I did something for someone that could not be repaid?

b. How do I treat people that can do nothing for me?



Study Topic 2 – *Not* Loving the Wrong Way

Paul Encourages Christ’s Love, Not the World’s. Eph. 5:3-7

A. What do these verses tell us? 5:3-7

1. Fornication is sex outside of the marriage relationship. Uncleanness means impure, sexually driven motives. Covetousness, in this sexual based context, refers to the evil desire to possess that which belongs to another.

2. *Question:* Why does Paul abruptly begin talking about improper sexual relationships after talking about the love of Christ?

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3. Answer: It is not a huge leap to get **emotionally attached** to the people we are showing Christ's love to.

4. As discussed in the previous study, an effective strategy of the devil is to get Christians to make emotion based decisions. Satan wants us to do things because of how we're feeling not by the knowing of God's truth. The enemy knows that Christians repeatedly make sinful decisions because they "feel" a certain way. They "feel" like they are in love with someone and therefore rationalize away the truth that their behavior is modeling the very things that God considers evil such as adultery and fornication.

B. What do these verses mean? 5:3-7

1. Christians should be careful to not pervert the love of Christ by allowing it to end up looking like the world's love.
2. Christians must keep their guard up to prevent sinful satisfaction of misplaced desire.
3. Even kidding around about sexual matters is unacceptable and only models what we were when we were dead to God.

C. How should these verses impact my life? 5:3-7

1. I am responsible to regularly evaluate myself:
 - a. Am I developing an emotional bond with anyone I should not be?
 - b. Am I finding emotional satisfaction in someone other than my spouse?
 - c. Do I have an accountability partner that can ask me the tough questions that watches my back?
 - d. Is my walk with God close enough to be able to offer help to another Christian if I were asked?

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Study Topic 3 – Living *Out* the Truth

Christians' Lifestyles Should Reveal Their Exposure to God's Truth. Eph. 5:8-21

A. What do these verses tell us? Eph. 5:8-21

1. The truth of God's written Word gives clarity and perspective for present day decisions in life. It really is as Ps 119:105 puts it: "...a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."
2. Paul says our very lifestyles should show others that we are regularly exposed to the truth.
3. Our lives' habits should be noticeably different from the world's.

B. What do these verses mean? Eph. 5:8-21

1. There should be enough of a distinction in the way we live our lives compared to the unsaved in the world that outsiders see a difference.
2. This difference should dominate our lives to a point where we are more under the influence of the Holy Spirit than under the influence of the world or our flesh.
3. Being under the influence of the Holy Spirit brings us back to unity with each other. Selflessness is the key feature of our behavior and we yield the right of way to each other in reverence to God.

C. How should these verses impact my life? Eph. 5:8-21



1. Am I spending enough **alone time** in God's Word to alter my **behavior** from that of the worlds'?
2. Am I under the influence of the Holy Spirit or my own desires?

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3. **Group Discussion** (⊕ 15 min.)

(Try to facilitate the group's discussion and not do most of the talking during this time.)

1. What is a defining characteristic of Christ's love? *It is self sacrificing.*

2. What are ways a Christian can show self sacrifice toward others? *Because in our society our time is so valuable, spending time to visit or help someone can be a strong way to communicate Christ's sacrificial love. Doing something for someone which can not be repaid is another idea for showing Christ's love.*

3. What is another defining characteristic of Christ's love? *It unconditionally accepts all who are willing to receive it. It is offered to all.*

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4. How can Christians show unconditional acceptance toward others? *One thing is we must dismiss our expectations of others. If we don't place our expectations and demands on others we will not be frustrated with others and we will be more willing to accept them as they are. We can take the "beam" out of our own eye or drop the stones we are so quick to cast. We must be to willing include outsiders into our Christian community and culture. Many times newcomers don't behave like us because they either don't know what the Bible says about our practices or they aren't seeing anything attractive about the way we are living out our Christianity.*

5. How does a Christian consistently maintain a truth-based lifestyle? *Thought patterns must daily be injected with God's truth. Why daily? The physical portion of our thought processes is decaying every second. They must be reinforced. The Holy Spirit will stir thought patterns connected to what He has been teaching us in our Bible study times. We must put God's truth into our thinking – it is fuel for the Spirit to use in our decision making.*

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4. ⇄ Review / Preview (⊕ 3 min.) (What is the group learning to do that they can repeat when they are away from the group or this study is completed?)

🔑 If You Forget Everything Else, Remember...

How do Christians consistently live under the influence of the Holy Spirit?



As Christians spend **daily** time in God's Word, the input of His truth into the thinking provides "ammunition" for the Holy Spirit to **stir** godly choices.

Getting Ready for Next Week

1. **How's your alone time with God?** Prayer & Bible Reading?
2. **For further study, read Gal. 5:16-25**
3. **Next week:** "Driving Instructions for Relationships"

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