

LIVING THE WORD—Week 3 (Aug. 23-29)

The God-Filled Family: How God Can Transform Our Families

In this series we are considering what it means to have families shaped by the presence of God. As a guide we are using Ephesians 4:17-5:21, which talks about living with a renewed attitude and a new self made to be like God. We hope this study will help us grow in that new reality.

Sunday, Aug. 23: A Family That Practices Purity

“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for the Lord’s people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving...For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.” (Ephesians 5:3-12 Today’s NIV)

As the “Lord’s people” (literally, “saints”), we should have nothing to do with the immorality characteristic of a pagan lifestyle. The first term, “sexual immorality,” refers to any illicit sex, including adultery and prostitution. “Impurity” refers especially to sexual impurity (Rom. 1:24; 1 Thess. 4:7; Eph. 4:19). “Greed” or “covetousness” could refer to greed for money, but in this context it more likely refers to sexual greed (in 4:19 the term referred to greedy lust for sexual impurity). Such greedy desire (whether for sex or money) is idolatry—setting one’s heart on something other than God (5:5). The world will try and deceive us into believing that such immorality and idolatry is good and normal, but Paul says it could cost us our inheritance in God’s kingdom. We need to take special care to remove all such influences from our homes.

Since immorality must not be named among us (5:3), all vulgar speech is out of place. “Obscenity” refers to indecent, disgraceful speech (cf. Col. 3:8). “Foolish talk” refers to the sinful speech of a fool (cf. Rom. 1:21-25 where the idolatry and immorality of fools is contrasted with thanksgiving.). “Crude” or “coarse joking” probably refers to the witty use of suggestive language and double entendres (the kind of humor popular in so many TV shows!). The vocabulary of holy people should be marked by thanksgiving, not crudity.

Because the light of Christ has transformed us, we have undergone a radical conversion and can no longer be “sharers together” with the disobedient (5:7). We *are* light in the Lord, so we should go about our lives as people of light (5:8). God’s light will produce visible fruit in our lives—goodness and righteousness and truth—and reveal the deceitfulness of sin. The contrast between our way of life and the lives of pagans should expose the works of darkness, which are too shameful to even mention. We should be so transformed into God’s image that we are embarrassed just to say what others do behind closed doors. Unfortunately, our culture has become so saturated with the immorality of popular entertainment, that many of us have become too calloused and desensitized to feel shame and embarrassment any more.

Paul then quotes lines from what seems to have been a very early hymn (5:14), which his first readers probably knew. Many scholars believe it may have been sung at baptisms as a call to converts to awaken to a new day in the light of Christ. These lines certainly point to our new reality when we are baptized into Christ. Once in darkness and dead in our sins, we now are raised up in Christ, who shines his light into our hearts and transforms us into His light.

Next Week: A Family That Always Gives Thanks (Ephesians 5:15-20)

Questions to discuss with your family and home church:

1. What do greedy desire for money and greedy desire for sex have in common?
2. In what ways can impurity enter into our homes?
3. How does a sense of being embarrassed or ashamed to talk about immorality help protect us from sinful behavior?
4. How could we resist the temptation to participate in inappropriate humor (conversations, email, watching TV or movies with others, etc.) without being rude to others?
5. In what ways do we or should we “expose the works of darkness” by the way we live?
6. How do “goodness, righteousness, and truth” stand in contrast to so much of what we see in entertainment and the internet?
7. What could we do to get rid of impure influences in our homes? How can we fill our homes with things that are good and right and true?
8. Pray together that God would help us practice more purity in our homes.