

# EPHESIANS | Children of Light

## Jimmy Harris July 2, 2023

### Introduction

#### Ephesians 5:1-21

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.

### WALKING IN LOVE WALKING AS CHILDREN OF THE LIGHT WALKING IN WISDOM

### Walking in Love

#### Ephesians 5:1-2

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.

“Be imitators of God.” How can anyone imitate God? How in the world am I supposed to be like God? That sounds impossible. Of course, Paul does not mean we are to imitate God's eternal qualities. Only God is all powerful, all knowing, and all present. He goes on to explain what he means — “Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, sacrificially.” What does it look like to walk in love? What it looks like to imitate God — is to walk in the same kind of love that he does.

## **1 John 4:19-21**

19 We love because he first loved us. 20 If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

### ***How do we do that? How do we imitate God as his beloved children?***

Imitate God as his beloved children. I’m so glad Paul used this analogy. Because when I try my best to love people, it can be difficult. The kind of love he is talking about is of the same kind of love that a parent has for their beloved children. ***God loves us like beloved children.***

I have three sons — my boys are 22, 17, and 10 one in college, one in high school, and one in elementary school.

When I think about the love that I have for my children I get a glimpse at what God’s word is saying here. You see, I don’t have to work too hard at loving my kids. It’s automatic because they are mine. They don’t have to worry if I will stop loving them. I can’t. It’s settled as an identity as unchangeable as their last name. I am their dad and they are my boys. Forever. They could never do anything that would make me stop loving them, and they are stuck with me too in the same way. I am their dad, for better or for worse. Forever.

### ***Walking in love looks like the love a good father has for his children.***

That’s how I love my kids. Totally. Unconditionally. Sacrificially. That is the kind of love that God has for us.

When your baby is born it also a terrifying feeling. There is no instruction manual. When I put together a desk from IKEA there are always parts left over. Sometimes there are pieces that are put on backwards. When I look at the face of my little baby and then look at the IKEA desk I just built, I feel a deep inadequacy to fulfill the job as a dad. What if I put you together wrong! What if I don’t do this right!

### ***Walking in love is vulnerable.***

*“To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. To love is to be vulnerable.”<sup>1</sup>*  
~ C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*

God loves us like that – as beloved children. We share a Dad that loves us immeasurably more than anything we can imagine.

### ***Walking in Love requires both giving and receiving. (John 3:16)***

*It’s difficult to receive love.*

*Love is not only something you give, but also something that must be received.*

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<sup>1</sup> C.S. Lewis. *The Four Loves* (HarperCollins, Feb 14, 2017)

Healthy love is like a lake. I grew up around a beautiful lake in Northern Idaho. The Coeur d Alene Lake is fed by the CDA river and the Saint Joe River and the outflow of the lake is the Spokane River which pours through a huge waterfall into Post Falls. There has to be water flowing INTO the lake, AND water flowing OUT of the lake, otherwise it will become stagnant or a puddle.

Walking in Love has a flow — like in **John 15** — “Abide in me and I will abide in you — and you will produce much fruit.”

***Water needs to come in, and it needs to go out.  
Like love, it must be both received and given.***

If it only goes out...it becomes a dried-up puddle.  
If it flows in and doesn't flow out, it will shortly become a shallow swamp.  
But if water flows in, and water flows out — it will become a refuge for life.

***What does it look like to walk in love?***  
*It's not just a feeling.*  
*It's not just action.*  
*It's not just unconditional.*

***Walking in Love is more than a feeling.***

***The purpose of love is to will for what is the best for someone else.***

*Love is not merely a feeling or simply an action. Love is only possible when it is kept with clear vision for what is good and beautiful.*

*When love is just a feeling — it devolves into a self-centered and often demanding master.*

*When love is merely a devotion or a forced action of the will it can become cold and filled with resentment.*

*“It cannot be said too often that agape love is not desire, and not delight. Desire and feelings generally have a different nature than love, and if we don't understand this clearly, we will remain helpless to enter into love and to receive it into ourselves. Desire and feelings fall into the domain of impulse, not that of choice. They aim at their satisfaction, not at what is better and possibly best. Choice considers alternatives and weighs what is best. If its vision is broad enough, it will find what is good and right. If it is surrendered to God, united with his will, it will be able to do what is best. That of course is the nature of love. It seeks what is best. That is why it enables a person to refrain from hating their enemy, which they might very well want to do, and to seek what is good for them along with all others involved. This certainly does not mean you just give in and do what the enemy (or friend) wants or let them have their way. That might be the worst thing you could do to them. Love, then, is a condition of the will embedded in all fundamental dimensions of the human personality. It is not something you choose to do, but what you choose to be.”<sup>2</sup>*  
~ Dallas Willard

LOVE has an aim.

***The aim of love is to do what is best for another person. (John 3:16)***

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<sup>2</sup> Dallas Willard. *Life without Lack* (Thomas Nelson, Feb 27, 2018) p. 167

That means that frequently to love someone else you will not do what they want, even at a high cost to yourself.

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## Walking as Children of the Light

Our culture tries to distort and capitalize on our need for love. It takes advantage of Christian kindness and constantly markets that we “accept” their version of love. Maybe you have seen the bumper sticker “love is love” or “co-exist,” or maybe you have noticed the thousands of businesses that have flaunted their pride flags and same sex commercials all month long.

There are so many distortions of real love. Distortions that lead us towards coveting what we do not have and what is not ours. Distortions that lead us to demand, control, or hate anyone that disagrees with their desires.

### Ephesians 5:3-5

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.

We are all, as His Beloved Children called to walk in purity.

What is sexual immorality? Sexual immorality or *porneia* in the Greek has a broad meaning.

*Porneia* is a Greek word that essentially means “illicit sexual activity.” It is a general, inclusive word for **any kind** of sexual immorality and occurs about 25 times in the New Testament. (*Matthew 15:19; Mark 7:21; Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25; Romans 1:29; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Galatians 5:19; Colossians 3:5; Revelation 9:21*).

The English word pornography is from the word *porneia*.

### Recent Statistics

- The porn industry’s annual revenue is more than the NFL, NBA, and MLB combined. It is more than the revenues of ABC, CBS, and NBC combined!
- Porn sites get more visitors each month than Netflix, Amazon, and Twitter combined.
- 47% of families in the United States report that pornography is a problem in their home.
- Pornography use increases marital infidelity by 300%
- Eleven is the average age that a child is first exposed to pornography.

Never has so much sexual sin been so readily available to more people. It is a shift in human history unlike any other. As the Church we cannot be blind to this problem or find ways to minimize its impact. This plague of darkness is spreading and has a devastating de-humanizing impact on the hearts of those who are ensnared by it. It empowers an entire industry of human enslavement and abusive trafficking on a scale that is unprecedented.

### Ephesians 5:6-14

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,

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Our culture is so confused and distorted right now about human sexuality that we are given one day (Memorial Day) to celebrate the men and women who have given their lives for this great nation. In contrast we are pressured to celebrate for 30 days sexual immorality with what is now called “PRIDE” month. New York recently elevated a horned statue of a woman to celebrate abortion and women’s rights. The White House is lit up with rainbow colors. It is an overwhelming problem.

***Here at Grace Chapel, we believe what the word of God says about sexuality. We believe there are only two genders. “We believe the only biblical standard of marriage is between one biological man and one biological woman. We believe God created sexual intimacy as a sacred thing to be celebrated within the confines of biblical marriage. Sexual relations of any sort, outside of biblical marriage is sin.”***

We will not waver in this. This includes everyone.

**Notice right away the antidote to perversion? To covetousness? *It is thanksgiving.* “Instead” let there be thanksgiving.**

To covet is wanting to be or to have something that is not yours.

- You cannot lust and be grateful.
- You cannot covet and praise at the same time.
- *If you want to walk in purity you need to live a life of daily thanksgiving.*

Don’t miss the compassionate tone that Paul has in verse 8. *“For at one time you were darkness but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of the light.”*

Paul is applying this to everyone.

We are ALL called to walk in purity.

*We don’t shame and hate sinners because at one time we too were living in darkness.*

**But now...you are children of the light!**

*We don’t have anything to do with darkness, but that doesn’t mean we won’t have anything to do with “those people.”*

You cannot expose PRIDE MONTH for what it is with PRIDEFUL Christians. *The only way to expose evil is to focus on what is good and to speak the truth in love. **To be children of the light.***

**Remember, you can love someone and disagree with them at the same time.**

**Personal:** When Grayson, my son, was about 5 years old he asked for a Batman backpack for his birthday. The backpack had a button that when you pushed it, two big wings would pop out. He was so excited about it. He talked about it constantly. When he got it out of the box, he put it on and ran out to the playset in the

backyard. He climbed up to the top of the slide, popped open the wings...and jumped...and crashed beneath the slide in a heap of batwings. We found out later that he believed that if he had the backpack on, he would be able to fly. He was very disappointed.

*If any of you believed you could fly, and I said to you — great! You be you! I affirm you! Good luck! If I stood by while you jumped off a tall building, I would be a real monster. If I loved you, I would explain to you — that you cannot fly.*

***I know it's not popular. But if a boy came to me and said I believe I am a girl. I would not agree with him. I would not pretend along with him. I would not call him his preferred pronoun. I would explain to him the truth. That he is boy. That he is made in God's image and that he is confused.***

**Why? Because that is what love does. It tells the truth.**

The cultural battle over gender pronouns is not just semantics. It is the degradation of very image of God. It is an intentional attack on the truth and ultimately our religious freedoms.

### **Romans 1:21-28**

21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. 24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. 28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.

**Here are some practical tips for protecting the innocence of your own soul and the hearts and minds of your children.**

- Put reasonable limits on screen time.
- Vid-angel
- Filters through the web browser
- Bark — Cell phone app that blocks or warns you if your children click on something they shouldn't.
- Covenant Eyes — Sets up accountability by emailing a person of your choosing if you click on something inappropriate.
- Share your passwords with your spouse, not your kids.
- Voting for men and women that share our Christian values.
- Vote with your money

Families listen to me... Not having a filter on your computers and phones is like leaving a loaded gun in your kitchen. You would never put your kids at that kind of risk with a loaded weapon. Don't be naïve! We are at war. It is not peacetime! Don't wait until evil has a foothold in your home before you begin to fight back. *An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.*

Recently, we deleted some streaming services from our smart tv due to the outrageous content they were marketing to kids. It was frustrating because we liked a bunch of other things about the service, and we probably wouldn't have made a financial decision to part ways if they had not actually aimed their shameful content at my kids.

***Don't only focus on removing the evil! – focus on what is good, right and true.***

BE children of light — not experts in avoiding the darkness, because the truth is you can set up your life to be pure and still falter.

*You can do your best as a parent to protect your kids and the truth is that they can get around it.*

Instead ask yourself...

- What do I need to do to get more light in my life and less darkness?
- What filters do I need to put in place to remove temptation?
- Focus your attention on what is good, what is right, and what is true.

*Why do we fill our minds with useless things? With darkness, with evil? When we could fill our minds with what is good, true, and beautiful?*

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## **Walking in Wisdom**

There is no cut and dry way to navigate all of this. It's a mess, and we are in it. It is going to require discernment, compassion, and wisdom. Paul ends this passage with a call to walk in wisdom.

### **Ephesians 5:15-21**

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. Walk in wisdom not like a fool.

*There are three categories of people in the world according to scripture.*

- A wise person is confronted with reality, and they are glad. They will thank you for it.
- A fool is confronted with reality, and they will try to change reality.
- When an evil person is confronted with reality, they will make you suffer for it.

When you hear the disturbing statistics on sexual immorality, or when you see the assault on our culture trying to alter reality and attack our religious freedoms. When you allow garbage to have free reign in your phone, on you kids' phones, on your computers. When you neglect voting for what is good and right because you feel helpless. When you neglect protecting yourself against all that is evil — it is easy to feel overwhelmed, and helpless to stand against the tide coming in against the Church.



If you have been captured in sin. If you have been complacent in allowing evil to run rampant into your home. If you are discouraged, addicted, helpless, or hopeless — Christ has come that you might be free from sin and live with a new hope, a new power, and a new joy that can only be found in learning how to walk with Jesus.

**Matthew 11:28**

28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

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**Discussion Questions**

1. What do I need to do to get more light in my life and less darkness?
2. What filters do I need to put in place to remove temptation?

**NOTES**