



Life in the Spotlight - Eph 5:1-20

Jan 12 - Bryan Penner

INTRO

In Ephesians 5, Paul continues to explain how the Ephesians can best live in response to God's work in the universe. He touches down on several significant issues in the church at that time, providing pastoral advice and a challenge alongside each of these issues. The church needed to be different back then, and much of what Paul says is still helpful for us today.

Open with prayer¹, then read Eph 5:1-20 together as a group. Consider dividing it by paragraph. It's helpful to all use the same Bible translation. SLC preaches from the NLT.

SERMON RECAP

1. Intro and context (1-2)
 - a. Paul's instructions for THEM THEN, not necessarily EVERYONE ALWAYS.
 - b. Pagan idolatry, sexual promiscuity, oppression, and injustice were very prevalent in the Ephesian culture.
 - c. Why did Paul think these instructions mattered IN EPHESUS?
2. Sexuality, impurity, and greed (3-5)
 - a. The Ephesian culture was very sexually promiscuous. Excessive legalism, and excessive licence were present within the church.
 - b. Reflections on the challenges of "purity culture".
 - c. Paul connects sexuality and impurity with greed (3)
 - i. Sexual immorality has a hard time existing in a world filled with healthy and contented people. Sexuality might have our attention, but greed often has our hearts.

¹ Some groups prefer to begin with a longer time of sharing and prayer. This is a good instinct and ensures that prayer time doesn't get shortened by time constraints.



- ii. Change your language (4) Don't get stuck in old patterns and cycles, abandon your destructive ways of living.
 - iii. Trade sexuality, covetousness, and greed in for thanksgiving. Instead of shopping around, look at what you have. Keep your eyes on what's important.
- d. Lord of the Rings - Frodo and Sam in the dead marshes
 - i. *"The tricky lights. Candles of corpses, yes, yes. Don't you heed them! Don't look! Don't follow them!"*
 - ii. Don't go near the edge, stay clear. Let even your conversations be far from the edge. Keep your eyes up, be thankful.
- 3. Empty words and living in the light (6-14)
 - a. Reference to the Golden Globes last week - speaking against ignoring wrong in favour one's own best interest.
 - b. Don't virtue signal. Don't ignore works of darkness. Expose them for what they are.
 - i. Not just with your words from a platform, but expose it with your life and wise interactions.
 - ii. As followers of Jesus this even more important to get right because we're supposed to be showing people a better way to live.
 - c. Reflections on christianity and culture - the horse that gets out of line draws the attention and sticks in the minds of onlookers.
 - i. Ephesians Christians were similarly scrutinised by both the Jewish and Roman cultures.
 - ii. The world has eyes on us, and that isn't a bad thing.
 - d. What is the fruit of the light?
 - i. The fruit of the light is not penance, it's not arrogance, it's not shame. Those things aren't pleasing to the Lord.
- 4. Are you making good use of your time? (15-17)
 - a. We all wish we didn't have to face the struggles, trials, and evil in the world.
 - b. *"I wish it need not have happened in my time," said Frodo. "So do I," said Gandalf, "and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us."*
The Fellowship of the Ring
- 5. What do you need to work on today?
 - a. Trading discontent for thanksgiving.
 - b. Living up to your words and being honest about something that you've held in darkness for a long time.
 - c. Letting go of bad fruit and seeing yourself and others as Jesus does.
 - d. Using your time well and doing what God is calling you into instead of hiding in fear.
 - e. Abandoning destructive behaviour (anger, a heart attitude...etc.)



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stood out to you from this week's text? Is there a word or a phrase that has taken on new meaning or life for you?
2. Respond to this statement: "Sexual immorality has a hard time existing in a world filled with healthy and contented people. Sex might have our attention, but greed often has our hearts."
 - a. Why do you think Paul connects sexual immorality with greed?
 - b. Is greed a root issue, or just a different issue alongside sexual immorality?
3. What does being thankful look like?
4. "Virtue signaling" is a term for making a public declaration that doesn't match your actions. What are some ways that this presents itself in our culture today?
 - a. Try not to just talk about politicians and celebrities. What are some ways that this happens with "real people"?
 - b. Have you ever done this yourself?
 - c. We all own phones that are assembled in factories overseas. What does that mean for us? Can we own a phone and still stand against injustice with integrity?
5. Paul loves talking about fruit. Here he talks about the "Fruit of the light" (Verse 9 - read in ESV or NIV), but elsewhere he talks about bearing fruit (Colossians 1), the "Fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5), and the "Fruit of Righteousness" (Philippians 1), just to name a few. In what ways might these fruits be different from one another? Are they the same?
6. If you're comfortable, share some of your reflections and something that you need to take away and work on from these past 2 weeks. What do you need to trade in? What "new clothes" do you need to put on?

ACT & PRAY

1. As a group, share areas of praise and need. Write them down so you can be praying for them during the week.
2. Remind yourselves of your Adopt-a-Missionary, and any prayer requests you've seen from them.
3. Spend time praying, either all together, or in smaller groups. Feel free to experiment with silent prayer, written prayer, etc.

