

Lesson 11 | November 15, 2021

Transformed by Christ

Study Text: Ephesians 4:17 through 5:21

Central Truth: Christians should reflect Christ's transforming power in their lives every day.

Key Verse: Ephesians 5:2

Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor (KJV).

Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God (NLT).

Learning Objectives

- The student will learn how to live a strong, growing Christian life.
- The student will understand better what it means to submit to Jesus.
- The student will live in a manner that reflects Jesus.

Introducing the Lesson

Say: The way we view the world in many ways determines our likes and dislikes—even what we like to eat. Every culture values different things, from food choices to greeting customs. In the Air Force I was held to a higher standard as an instructor, first sergeant, and representative to the community. As Christians, we are to have a higher standard than our culture. Today, we examine that standard.

Opening Activity—Title

Hold up, or display a picture of, a jar of pickled pigs' feet and a piece of beef jerky. Take a vote to see which item students prefer to eat. Discuss why some people love pigs' feet and others get nauseated at the idea of eating one. What other foods might bring similar responses?

Say: We are one race. We all came from Adam. Humanity has many cultures.

While culture may affect whether you prefer pickled pigs' feet or beef jerky, we must not let culture determine how we live out our faith day-to-day. Instead, our faith must determine how we interact with our culture. **In this lesson, we will examine how godly thinking works its way to a natural outflow of godly behavior.** (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Paul was writing to people who were relatively new Christians. Many of them were Gentiles, so their culture had taught them behaviors that were not in alignment with the

new life they were learning to live. So, he needed to provide them with instruction to help them live the transformed life available through Christ Jesus. **When Happy Jack Burbridge got saved, he still smoked cigars and cussed like a sailor. He threatened many fellow prisoners with a beating if they did not accept Jesus. He grew out of all this with the leading of the Spirit, Bible reading, and prayer.**

We are responsible for making right decisions about our attitudes, words, and behaviors; however, the Holy Spirit comes alongside to transform us and help us in our walk with God. This is what Paul was teaching to his original readers, as well as to us.

Part 1—Be Renewed in Your Mind

The Old Mind

Ephesians 4:17–19

[Eph 4:17-19 KJV] 17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, 18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: 19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

Say: In Ephesians 4, Paul exhorted the Ephesians to recognize that **Christians are to live differently from those who do not know Jesus.** Paul described the thinking of the Gentiles as “futile.” The Roman world of the first century was spiritually and morally decadent. As a result, most of the Ephesian believers had come out of that world, and Paul’s instruction began by reminding them to recognize what God had done for them through Christ. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

The Ephesian believers, as Gentiles, began the life of faith with no concept of the mandates of God. Their understanding had been darkened by their sinful condition (Ephesians 4:17–19). We must keep in mind that God does not force people to live in a state of spiritual darkness. They choose to do so because of their refusal to be receptive to the grace of God. And so, the Ephesians, like so many others throughout the Roman world, had hardened themselves against the gospel.

People with hardened hearts repeatedly reject overtures from God. Much like Pharaoh in the story of the Exodus, God offers many opportunities to respond to Him, but there comes a point where a person becomes so hardened that it is impossible to embrace any perspective of God.

As a result of their resistance to God, the Gentiles had reached a point where they did not resist immorality. If something seemed right to them, they did it—

often at the expense of others, and certainly at the expense of violating God's commands. Whereas God desires selfless living, the Gentiles practiced a lifestyle of greed and self-indulgence. They no longer felt shame for their many acts of sin. Their sensitivity had been replaced by a deadened conscience. Like a callus on one's hand, these individuals had become resistant to the pain that repeated misdeeds were causing them. Instead, they were "eager" in their spiritually impure practices (verse 19, NLT).

Discuss

? In what ways might we say that the Gentile world of Paul's time is like our world today?

? Can a Christian become calloused toward sin? Explain.?

The Renewed Mind

Ephesians 4:20–24

[Eph 4:20-24 KJV] 20 But ye have not so learned Christ; 21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; 23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; 24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Say: When we begin a relationship with Christ, He renews our minds and fundamentally changes our way of thinking. And so, as we learn the way of Christ, He helps us to transform our behavior in order that we can live to please Him. Jesus is the truth, and people are set free when they follow Him in newness of life. Just as Paul taught the Ephesians, we must decide to walk away from our old ways and take on His ways. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

In Ephesians 4:20–24, Paul described the process of adopting a lifestyle that reflects the transformation that occurs in a Christian's life. He began by telling the Ephesians to "throw off" the old self (verse 22, NLT). Believers must make the decision to walk away from their old way of living. A person can be set free through Christ, yet remain entrapped in the same circumstances and practices that he or she struggled with in the past. Christians must choose to turn from those things that threaten to ensnare them, doing so through the power of the Holy Spirit. Then that believer can walk in the freedom that has been given to him or her.

The process of "putting off" the old nature involves changing one's worldview by listening to the Holy Spirit, and learning from His instruction.

When Christians begin to see people the way that God sees them, they should begin to act selflessly and seek to do those things that please God.

Paul continued his illustration by telling his readers that they must “put on” new spiritual clothing—a new nature. This will result in a dramatic change in mindset and lifestyle. Whereas the old way of living demonstrated lust and corruption, Christians who are in Christ will live righteous and holy lives. **God has the power to change us through-and-through.** We become new creations when we are “in Christ” (see 2 Corinthians 5:17). This is a transformation that can only happen as a result of divine intervention. **We respond rightly to the great work He has done in us when we seek to live in ways that are “righteous and holy”** (Ephesians 4:24, NLT).

Resource Packet Item 1: A Portrait of Two Minds

Distribute the work sheet and divide your class into small groups. Assign half of the groups to work on column one of the sheet while the other half works on column two. Then ask several to share their answers in class, and take time to discuss these answers.

Discuss

? What changes take place in a person’s life at salvation?

? How can a person go from spiritual bondage to spiritual freedom?

Part 2—Give No Place to the Devil

Lay Aside Evil Behavior

Ephesians 4:25–31

[Eph 4:25-31 KJV] 25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. 26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: 27 Neither give place to the devil. 28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with [his] hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. 29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. 30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

Say: In the previous verses, Paul established that Christians must put off the old nature and put on the new. In this section, Paul was specific as to what behaviors and attitudes have no place in the life of a Christian. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

While Ephesians 4:25–31 records Paul’s instruction to Gentile believers twenty centuries ago, the practical truths he shared are just as valid for Christians today. This is because throughout the ages Christians have struggled with many of the same issues and temptations. As we examine Paul’s words, it is good to keep in mind that he was talking about behaviors that impact relationships between Christians. The first behavior Paul described that has no place in the life of a believer is lying. **If Jesus lives in the believer and Jesus is “the Truth,” it is incompatible with one’s testimony that a Christian would be a liar. When a Christian lies to a fellow Christian, he or she break the bonds of love that have been established among the whole community of believers. The result is confusion and disunity within the Body.**

The second behavior Paul instructed the Ephesians to put off is a bad temper (verse 26). **Paul was not saying that a Christian must have no emotions, but that Christians should not be controlled by anger. (Note that verse 26 reads, “Don’t sin by letting anger control you,” NLT; see also Psalm 4:4.) Unchecked anger is not a fruit of a healthy walk with Christ. When a person does get angry, it is important that differences be worked out quickly to restore unity within the church.** Unresolved conflict based on anger holds many dangers. It provides the devil with an opportunity to tear the church apart with bad feelings, and it also can produce longstanding bitterness between individuals. So, although reconciling with another person can be awkward and difficult, such reconciliation is very important for a healthy church and a healthy walk with Christ.

Next Paul instructed the Ephesian believers that they should not be thieves (verse 28). In the culture of Paul’s day, not unlike today, there were those who would choose to steal rather than learn a trade. They would take the easy road to obtain goods rather than put in the hard work that was required of honest people. Instead, Paul instructed Christians to put their energy into earning an honest living. Such would not only preserve relationships with others in the church, but it would also keep them from dishonoring God, who is not pleased by thievery. Note also in verse 28 that Paul took his instruction a step further to say that Christians must not only avoid stealing; they must seek to make enough income so that they might be able to give something to others who are in need, if possible.

Then, in verse 29, Paul instructed that there is no place for foul or abusive talk among Christians. “Corrupt communication” (KJV) might be better translated “rotten” or “worthless” talk. A good word picture might be that of a rotten apple that touches good apples and causes them to become rotten. Paul stated that instead of conversation that corrupts or destroys, the words that come out of a Christian’s mouth should serve to build up those who hear them.

When “rotten” language is used by Christians, such words grieve the Holy Spirit (verse 30). Those who speak in a destructive manner are working against the very One that they claim seals their salvation. Christians must not have it both ways.

In verse 31, Paul listed six specific things that describe corrupt communication and lifestyle: bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. It is easy to see how each term is very much rooted in a lack of love toward others. This is why Paul’s list is so important. Love toward one another should be the hallmark of Christians and the church (John 13:35).

Resource Packet Item 2: Rotten Attitudes Lead to Rotten Language

Distribute the work sheet. Suggest that students take it home and prayerfully consider any attitudes that they need to conquer in order to demonstrate Christian love toward others.

Discuss

? How has your relationship with Christ impacted your speech and behavior toward others?

? Why do you think some Christians continue to struggle with bad attitudes toward others even as they live out the Christian life?

Embrace Godly Behavior

Ephesians 4:32 through 5:2

[Eph 4:32 KJV] 32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

[Eph 5:1-2 KJV] 1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; 2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

Say: Beginning in Ephesians 4:32, Paul contrasted coarse language with the attitudes that cultivate godly relationships. The one who reflects Jesus will be kind to others, have empathy for others, and be willing to work out one’s differences with others. This behavior is rooted in the actions and attitude of Jesus, who demonstrated the ultimate love when He forgave our sins against Him. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Ephesians 4:32 stands in stark contrast to the verses that precede it. Note each quality listed: kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness. These attitudes are potent unifiers within the body of Christ, largely because they reflect the

character of Christ. His kindness is constantly seen in the lives of His people. He is tenderhearted, recognizing our needs and demonstrating the kind of compassion that would lead the Son of God to the cross. And He has, above all, demonstrated forgiveness. It is not surprising, then, that He would expect us to forgive one another.

Ephesians 5:1 highlights the source and the motivation for these actions. We are children of God. **Love for one another, and love for God, ought to flow naturally from our lives because of the intimate relationship we have with God through Christ** (see 1 John 3:1,9–11).

Resource Packet Item 2: Five Things Forgiveness Does Not Mean

Distribute the information sheet and read through the points. Ask how these truths adjust students' thinking about forgiveness. Give students a chance to share personal experiences of forgiveness they have given or received.

In 5:2, Paul concluded his teaching regarding the appropriate attitudes and behaviors that Christians must “put on” by calling Christians to walk in love. In Paul’s instruction, we are reminded of the powerful words of Jesus, which reflect the teachings of the Law. When asked to name the greatest commandment, Jesus said: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:30–31, KJV; see Deuteronomy 6:4–5; Leviticus 19:18).

The kind of love we are called to have is the same kind of love that Jesus demonstrated to us. His sacrifice was the ultimate example of love, and it was received by God as a fragrant offering. In like manner, when Christians show love in their relationship to others, it is a fragrant offering to God.

Discuss

? Why do you think forgiving someone who hurt you can be so difficult?

? How can a Christian get the strength to live a holy life?

Part 3—Live in Christ’s Light

Pure Speech

Ephesians 5:3–6

[Eph 5:3-6 KJV] 3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; 4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. 5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an

idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. 6
Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

Say: After asserting that Christians should love one another, Paul contrasted his message of godly love with the sinfulness of sexual immorality. He says that sexual immorality has no place in the life of a person who is “in Christ.” (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Paul said sexual immorality should be avoided even as a matter of conversation among believers (Ephesians 5:3). Christians must not toy with immorality because it can ignite unholy passions. Paul offered further instruction and understanding to his words by stating that anything that could be considered filthy, such as joking about sex, is out of place for a Christian. In verse 4, Paul made a play on words by combining the Greek word *eutrapelia* (coarse joking, ribald talk) with the Greek word *eucharistia* (thankfulness) in the course of his statement. Instead of spending time focusing on immoral activities, the Christian should focus in being thankful for what God has given to them.

While a person’s behavior does not bring about his or her salvation, receiving salvation should naturally produce a distinct type of behavior. People whose lifestyles are marked by sexual immorality, impurity, or covetousness reveal their spiritual condition. Such a life reflects spiritual immaturity. Those who teach otherwise lead people astray and will experience the wrath of God on their lives (verses 5–6).

Discuss

? How do you react when people start telling inappropriate sexual stories?

? How can you keep your mind pure in an impure world?

Pure Relationships

Ephesians 5:7–14

[Eph 5:7-14 KJV] **7 Be not ye therefore partakers with them. 8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now [are ye] light in the Lord: walk as children of light: 9 (For the fruit of the Spirit [is] in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) 10 Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. 11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove [them]. 12 For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. 13 But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make**

manifest is light. 14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. 15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, 16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord [is]. 18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; 19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; 20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; 21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

Say: Paul told his readers that they should abstain from relationships with those who make light of sexual immorality. To associate with the sexually immoral would be to return to something from which the Christian had been set free. Christians must walk in a manner that reflects the freedom they have in Christ. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Ephesians 5:7–10 reminds us that it is the Christian’s responsibility to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Growing in any relationship provides an opportunity to figure out what the other person appreciates. If you love the person, you will desire to do the things that please them and avoid those things that displease them. This principle is true in a Christian’s relationship with God as well. It is the responsibility of Christians to get to know God and learn what He desires from them.

It is not enough to just avoid the darkness, however. We must actively work to expose the darkness in their lives to the light of truth (verses 11–13). This certainly applied to those who attempted to mislead the Ephesians through corrupt teaching. They would lose their power over people if their deeds were brought to light.

When darkness is exposed and people see the darkness for what it is, they will be able to turn to the light (verse 14). Note Paul’s metaphors for turning to God: awakening from sleep, being raised from the dead, and going from darkness into the light of Christ. Truly, being in Christ will transform all who will believe.

Discuss

? How do you choose your friends?

? How can a Christian grow in Christ on a daily basis?

What Is God Saying to Us?

Say: Salvation has the ability to transform the way we think. In turn, the way we think will determine how we behave. Sadly, there are Christians who do not grow, but allow

the message of the world rather than the message of God to shape their thinking. They forget that we have been set free from our sin through salvation, so that we no longer have to live in bondage. To revisit the sins of the past is dangerous, threatening to draw us back into the world and away from Christ. Once our thinking changes, then our behavior, attitudes, and speech should conform to the desires of God.

Living It Out

Ministry in Action

- Determine to live in the freedom you have been granted through God's grace.
- Examine your life to determine what behaviors you should cast off and what behaviors you should put on.
- Choose to adopt uplifting attitudes and language to glorify God.

Daily Bible Readings

Monday:

Transformed Heart and Conduct.
Proverbs 4:23–27

[Pro 4:23-27 KJV] 23 Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it [are] the issues of life. 24 Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. 25 Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. 26 Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. 27 Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.

Tuesday:

God Shines Light and Newness.
Isaiah 42:1–10

[Isa 42:1-10 KJV] 1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, [in whom] my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. 2 He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. 3 A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. 4 He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law. 5 Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: 6 I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; 7 To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, [and] them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. 8 I [am] the LORD: that [is] my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. 9 Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them. 10 Sing unto the LORD a new song, [and] his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof.

Wednesday:

Right Fasting Shines Light.

Isaiah 58:6–12

[Isa 58:6-12 KJV] 6 [Is] not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? 7 [Is it] not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? 8 Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy reward. 9 Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I [am]. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; 10 And [if] thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness [be] as the noonday: 11 And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. 12 And [they that shall be] of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.

Thursday:

Christ Shines Light.

Matthew 4:13–17

[Mat 4:13-17 KJV] 13 And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: 14 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, 15 The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, [by] the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; 16 The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. 17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Friday:

Renewed Minds.

Romans 11:33 through 12:2

[Rom 11:33-36 KJV] 33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable [are] his judgments, and his ways past finding out! 34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? 35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? 36 For of him, and through him, and to him, [are] all things: to whom [be] glory for ever. Amen.

[Rom 12:1-2 KJV] 1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, [which is] your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what [is] that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Saturday:

Put On the New Self.
Colossians 3:1–11

[Col 3:1-11 KJV] 1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, [who is] our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. 5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: 6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: 7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. 8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. 9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; 10 And have put on the new [man], which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: 11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond [nor] free: but Christ [is] all, and in all.