

Fact Sheet for **“Not One of My Favorite Passages”**
Ephesians 5:1-14

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I have many favorite passages in Scripture. Ephesians 5:1-14 is not one of them. It brings back too many memories of my own failings. It brings to mind score after score of Christians I've met in 35+ years of pastoral ministry who have shipwrecked, and are in the process of shipwrecking, their lives because they chose, and are choosing in some cases, not to follow passages like this one.

Watch for the eight imperatives. They are essentially commands given by God through the apostle Paul. Here's a truth. These commands are very possible for Christians to obey. When I don't measure up it is not God who is lacking in power but I who am lacking the willingness at that moment to live for him. And, you never reap anything good from sin. Watch out! (Galatians 6:7).

ESV ¹ ¶ **Therefore be** (imperative #1) **imitators of God, as beloved children.** ² **And walk** (imperative #2) **in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.**

Christ willingly gave himself up for us. This was a pleasing offering and sacrifice to God. We are to walk in love as Christ loved us! There is no room for selfishness or bitterness.

Paul wrote that Christians should be imitators of God. This is seen in verses like Luke 6:36 and Philippians 2:5). As Christ, in love, was willing to go to the cross for us, and as this was a fragrant offering to God, so too our choices to live for God on a day to day basis are also a fragrant offering to God.

However, behavior that is inconsistent with God should not even be found among Christians.

³ ¶ **But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named** (imperative #3) **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.**

When Paul wrote that these things shouldn't even be named among the Ephesian believers, this meant that these things shouldn't exist among them.

The word translated “sexual immorality” is a word that includes all manner of sexual sin. It is the word we get our word “porn” from.

“Impurity” is moral uncleanness.

“Covetousness” is greed.

“Filthiness” can also be translated “obscenity”.

For “foolish talk” think what the book of Proverbs says about a fool in passages like...

ESV Proverbs 10:18 The one who conceals hatred has lying lips, and whoever utters slander is a fool.

ESV Proverbs 15:5 A fool despises his father's instruction, but whoever heeds reproof is prudent.

ESV Proverbs 20:3 It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife, but every fool will be quarreling.

“Crude joking” is coarse and vulgar.

There is a disconnect in our day and age, even among Christians. What we would be horrified to hear in church, what we *may* not say to our children or our parents, seems all too frequently to be open game for our posts on Facebook. I have seen all the things in Ephesians 5:3-4 that “must not even be named”

among Christians show up in the Facebook posts of believers! Are those posts consistent with this scripture or inconsistent with it? They are inconsistent with being imitators of God!

Instead there should be thanksgiving for what God has given us, for what he has done.

And think about it. Those whose lives are regularly marked by these things are very likely not Christians.

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.

Greed is a form of idolatry.

It is clear that those who imitate these things are not imitating God.

⁶ Let no one deceive (imperative #4) you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

How do you really think God in eternity will judge Christians who do these things?"

Do you really think God will not send ugly consequences into your life now if you practice these things?

⁷ Therefore do not become (imperative #5) partners with them; ⁸ for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk (imperative #6) 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 (imperative #7) in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose (imperative #8) them.

The word translated "partners" carries the idea of joining with the world in having these vices.

Notice that one of these imperatives is that we are to expose the works of darkness. Remember that verses 7-11 are one sentence. Paul talks about light and darkness earlier in this sentence. Exposing the works of darkness means to bring the light of God on them, exposing these kinds of works as sinful.

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, ^{14a} for anything that becomes visible is light.

The details of sin are shameful even to speak of. You can feel this in your soul.

^{14b} Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

This may be a quote from an early Christian hymn based on Isaiah 60:1.

ESV Isaiah 60:1 ¶ Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.

It is a reminder to let the light of God shine in your life.

This reminds me of one of my favorite passages.

ESV Romans 12:1-2 ¶ I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.