



+ **YOU**

Spring 2024
Being an Authentic Church

Sermon Title: Live Life Together as Children of the Lord

To be used with Session 6: Doing Life Together in Christ

Scripture: Ephesians 5:1-17

Connection with Bible Study: To complement the Bible study “Doing Life Together in Christ,” this sermon will further develop Paul’s reference in 1 Thessalonians 5:4 to God’s people being “children of light.” From this parallel passage in Ephesians 5, Paul commanded us to act upon our relationship as children through the way we conduct our lives together. Paul added to what he said to the Thessalonian church by urging the Ephesian believers to live together as children of love, as children of light, and as children who seek always to align their lives with God’s will.

Introduction: Ephesians is more than a letter written *to* a church; it is a letter whose subject *is* the church. In John R. W. Stott’s words, “[Ephesians is about] what God has done through Christ and what we must be and do in consequence. And its central theme is ‘God’s new society.’”¹ This “new society” is the church, and Paul’s description of it is decidedly familial in nature when he referred to its members as “children” (5:1, 8, and implied in 15). The church is the family of God in Christ, and we are His children (cf. John 1:12-13). Paul’s point in this passage is that as God’s children we are to conduct our lives in a certain way, and he used three imperative clauses to tell us what that way is.

Each of these three clauses contains the Greek word *peripateō*, which the CSB translates as “walk” in verse 2 and “live” in verses 8 and 15. The meaning of this compound verb is “to conduct one’s life” (*peri*, the preposition “about” and *pateō*, “to walk”).² As children of God, Paul commanded us to live our lives accordingly.

1. Live together as children who walk in the love of God’s Son (5:1-7).

How we relate to one another in the church must be characterized by love. Paul said we are to “walk in love,” not as the world defines it, but as God has demonstrated it through Christ. We are to be “imitators” of Christ’s self-sacrificing love. His love also provides us with a strong motivation for loving one another. Our Lord’s sacrificial love for us compels us to love one another in the same spirit. Both His love for us and our love for one another are a “fragrant offering to God.”

The strong conjunction “but” signals Paul’s warning about the love-destroying enemy we each face every day. It is interesting to note that the sins listed by Paul have a connection to sexual immorality. Sexual sin has always been a destroyer of genuine love—the love we have

¹John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, in *The Bible Speaks Today* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 25-6.

²Fritz Rienecker and Cleon Rogers, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 535.

for God, for ourselves, and for one another. As children of love, we are to be different. We must not be “partners” with those whose lives have been totally given over to sexual sin.

2. Live together as children who walk in the light of God’s righteousness (5:8-14).

Paul used the symbols of “darkness” and “light” to illustrate a contrast of spiritual conditions before and after salvation or between what we once were and what we now are.

- a. What we once were apart from Christ.** Paul did not say we were once *in* darkness or *of* darkness, even though both prepositions are applicable when describing our pre-conversion lives. His description is more horrifying than that. Since there is no preposition, in effect Paul said, “Darkness is what we once were.” We were not only in sin, but our very nature was characterized by sin.
- b. What we now are in Christ.** The contrast shifts from past tense to present tense—from the darkness of the past to the light of the present. Again, there is no preposition. Truth and righteousness (light) are what we now are in Christ (cf. Eph. 2:1-3). Paul qualified this new spiritual reality by commanding us to conduct our lives in conformity to who we now are as children of light. Paul also quantified this new reality by identifying the expected “fruit of the light” (v. 9). Our new lives in Christ are to radiate goodness (our relationship with one another), righteousness (our relationship with God), and truth (our personal integrity).

3. Live together as children who walk in line with God’s will (5:15-17).

The phrase “pay careful attention” translates *acribōs*, a word that eventually worked its way into the French language and gave us “acrobat.” Its root meaning in the ancient Greek pictures the tightrope walker who must take great care where he places his steps. We might call it, “walking the straight and narrow,” or to borrow from a Johnny Cash song, we could say “I walk the line.” God’s will is the line His “dearly loved children” must prayerfully, carefully, and watchfully walk in life. Dr. Roy Beaman, one of my theology professors in seminary, once said to our class, “Brethren, grace seeks not to make philosophers or brilliant men but men sensitive to God’s will.”

Conclusion: Paul had a purpose for reminding us that we are God’s “dearly loved children.” To be a child of God should mean something. It should mean that we are different from those who are outside of Christ and His redeemed church. There used to be a popular admonition that parents would sometimes give to their children that said, “Remember *whose* you are.” Paul takes that a step further. We are not only to remember Whose we are, but we are to conduct our lives accordingly.

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