

# Growing in Our Shared Faith



# **Ephesians 5:1-6**

## **Live Like You Are Loved**

Once a father drove his son to a baseball tryout. The boy was nervous, so the dad started planning a simple encouraging pep talk about motivation. When they parked in the lot, the son expressed his doubt of whether he was good enough. Thinking about all the times the two of them had thrown the ball together, attended games, and talked about baseball, the dad asked, “Well, Son, what drove you to this point?” The son quickly replied, “A 1998 Toyota 4-Runner with a V6 engine and 4WD.”

The dad said, “Well, son, if it doesn’t work out, you’ll make a great mechanic or car salesman....Son, just do your very best. I love you and am proud of you. I think you’ll enjoy today.” The boy didn’t have to be a baseball player to make his dad proud. His father just wanted him to do his best and be a man of character that represented his family well.

Today, we’re looking at a text about motivation for living with Christian character; that motivation is our Father’s love.



**5:1 Therefore, be imitators of  
God, as dearly loved children,**

**2 and walk in love, as Christ  
also loved us and gave himself  
for us, a sacrificial and fragrant  
offering to God.**

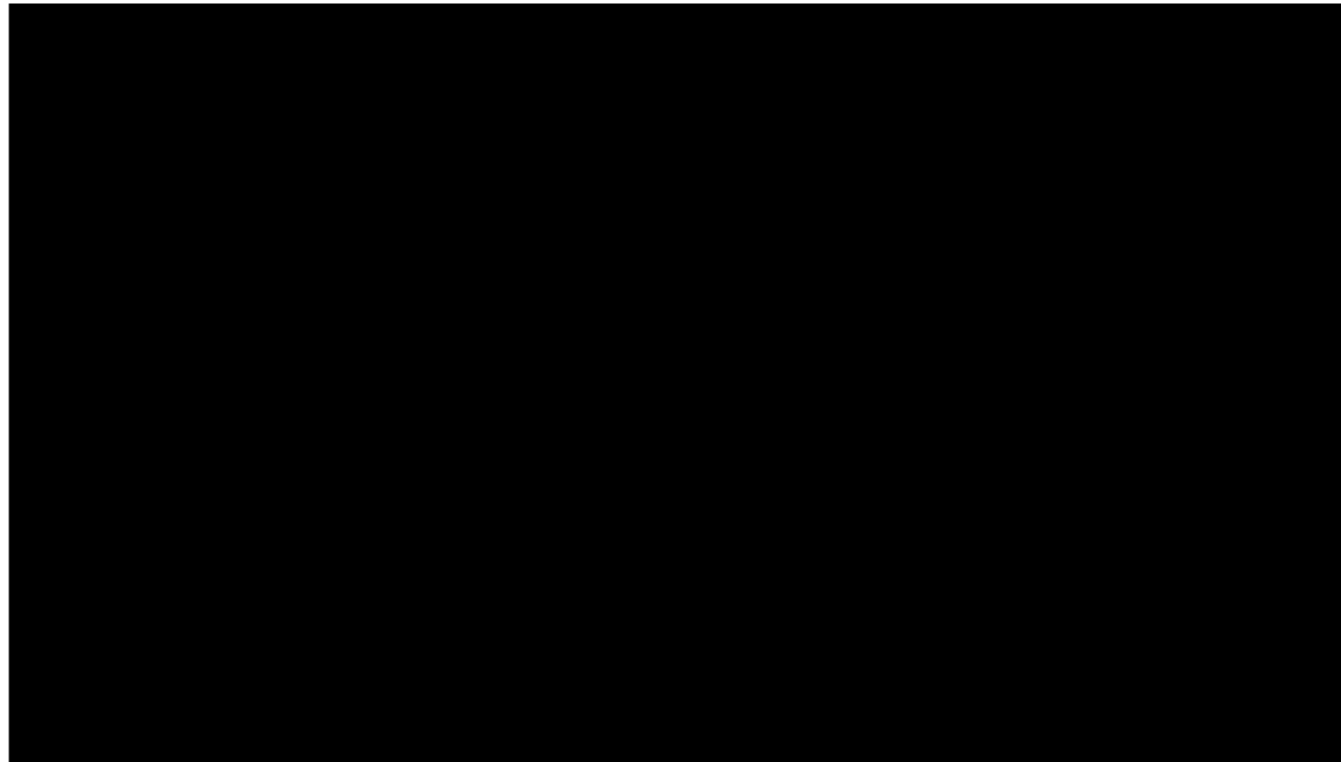
**3 But sexual immorality and any impurity or greed should not even be heard of among you, as is proper for saints.**

**4 Obscene and foolish talking or  
crude joking are not suitable,  
but rather giving thanks.**

**5 For know and recognize this:  
Every sexually immoral or  
impure or greedy person, who is  
an idolater, does not have an  
inheritance in the kingdom of  
Christ and of God.**



**6 Let no one deceive you with empty arguments, for God's wrath is coming on the disobedient because of these things.**



Now, this passage is very straight forward. If you get nothing else today, please take in this passage and apply it to your life.

**Rest in the Father's love for you  
so that love drives your life.  
(Eph. 5:1–2)**

1) Rest in the Father's love for you so that love drives your life. (Eph. 5:1–2)

Now, The Father's love is revealed in Christ's love and voluntary sacrifice.

You are loved. You need to accept that truth. And once you accept that you are loved by God, God's love reshapes how you view yourself and how you view desires in this life.

Some of you have had great fathers. Some of you know what a good father is like by means of contrast with your father. Some of you had good fathers, but those men died before they had a chance to raise you. So, you have learned what a good father is like by having other men step up in your life. The same can be said for mothers.

By being connected to the church, many of you have experienced what it is like to have several mothers and grandmothers care about you, pray for you, encourage you, sacrifice for you.

We have a Father whom we have not seen but who provides for us daily with everything we need for life and godliness. He has given us His very Son, who willingly came to rescue us because love for this Father of ours. We should grow up to be like Jesus in our character.

A child doesn't just develop into an adult overnight. Parents raise them. Children depend on the love and acceptance of parents to move forward with confidence in this world. Your love gives your children roots and gives them the confidence to see how high they can reach and grow.

As much as a parent can love a child, God has loved you infinitely more.

You are to rest in His love. You need to accept that you are accepted in Christ. If you need proof that God loves you, go to Romans 5:8. This is the love of God demonstrated, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

And your church family should be a constant reminder of God's love. Do you remember the commands from chapter 4 Paul went over? Commentators note the intentional similarities between Paul's style and household codes of the 1st century. Such household codes described how the members of a household were to conduct themselves for the harmony and honor of the house for the benefit of all in the house. If you are a believer in Christ, you are loved as part of the family of God in Christ.

Because the Father loves you and because the Son loves you, you should love others in this family. And if you love them, you will love them in action. The household codes of Eph. 4 represent how harmonious churches interact in love. They help provide boundaries to guide love for others in wisdom and compassion.

Love your fellow believers like they are family. Love your neighbor as yourself.

If you are a Christian and don't feel like you love others, you don't have a feeling problem. You have an action problem. You probably have not been acting on what is loving and not giving them a chance to love you as well. If you don't feel like you love them, find out what is actually loving toward them and do it. If you feel like you have love for fellow believers, don't let it remain only a feeling.

Having a loving family is the proper starting point for living our lives. God's love for us, including through His church, is meant to fill us and drive our lives.

One who knows and depends on the love of God has as a starting point, "God has spoken. God has spoken by means of His Son, therefore I live according to His love." Satan, the world, and the flesh still ask the same question Satan did in the Garden: Did God really speak?

God loves you. There is nothing that you could ever do to make God stop loving you or love you any less. But the enemy wants to make you doubt that love so that you seek the world's lusts for satisfaction.

## **Don't fall victim to the world's lusts; preserve the honor of Christian love. (Eph. 5:3–5)**

2) Don't be fall victim to the world's lusts; preserve the honor of Christian love. (Eph. 5:3–5)

- a. I grew up in a place where redneck humor hit a little close to home. I remember the first time hearing redneck jokes and thinking that sounds familiar. For example, if you have ever cut your grass and discovered an old vehicle, you might be a redneck.
- c. Have you ever heard the one about the water tower? If you have ever had to climb a water tower with a bucket of paint to defend your sister's honor, you might be a redneck.
  - i. Look, you may think that sounds outlandish. That sounds like regular Thursday nights where I grew up.
- b. Your name being connected to impurity is a matter of great dishonor. What are you connecting Jesus's name to? Selfishness and immoral sexual pursuits should never be attached to Jesus.
- c. A literal rendering of this text would read that sexual immorality, any kind of impurity, and greed should not even be named among you. The CSB communicates the idea of it. There should be no credible report of immorality, impurity, or greed among our church. Choose love not spiritual war against God and against your soul. There should not be a hint of these sins among us.

When we read that these things should not be heard among us, the apostle is not saying we should avoid talking about these sins. He himself talks about them. We should point out that such sins are inconsistent with the good enjoyable life that God intends for us. Lust and greed attempt to derail us and send us down the wrong tracks. They are not good desires and do not produce joy. They cause pain and produce dysfunctional families.

I get regular emails about how we can grow our church if we just subscribe to a promotional product and follow their steps to numerical growth, disregarding what we

teach or how we live.

We win people to Jesus when they are attracted to him by means of our message and integrity. We get into trouble and make Jesus less attractive when we allow “innocent little” versions of these sins to exist. These sins are sins and will grow. Have nothing to do with them.

d. Regarding sexual immorality, sexual immorality refers to any sexual act not between just a husband and wife. God created sexual intimacy to be good, and he designed it only to be within the boundaries of the marriage relationship between husband and wife. Some of you may be uncomfortable talking about the goodness of sex and romance between husband and wife.

Consider who is the ultimate author of Genesis 2 and Song of Solomon. If God didn't want to talk about it, why would he include such passages and books in the Bible. It is good and meant to be good between a husband and wife. We get into trouble when we try to silence good conversations about matters of sex, integrity, and money.

i. I know of a youth minister who had two interesting things happen with his youth families. First, he got in trouble with a family because he discussed the problems and consequences of sexual immorality with the youth. He assumed the parents of teenagers of the church would have already discussed the importance of keeping sex within the bounds of marriage. One mom was seriously angry that he discussed such boundaries with her 7th grader before she did. Several years later, he had to help with a family that was broken apart by sexual immorality. The mom in that family left her family for a man in the church she committed adultery with. Ironically, it was the same mom who railed on the youth minister about his warnings against sexual immorality. There should be no credible report of such sins within our church body.

e. The point of this prohibition is to live according to the honor of God's Son and of God's household. We are to be people characterized by love, and are to pursue love, true love.

Maybe you are someone who has been hurt by pursuit of sexual immorality. What matters more than your past sexual status is your status before God on judgment day. If you belong to Christ, you are part of his household. You will not make it into heaven based on your sexual status or on maintaining a median income. You only get to be with God forever based on the Son saying you get to be there with God. Period. But if you belong to Jesus and God's house, you should have your life conform to the pattern of the house to which you belong.

f. Impurity—general category of uncleanness, of participating in things that are unholy. The context is all about desires for comfort or satisfaction contrary to God's expectations. I heard it put this way in the past few days: The world tells you to follow your heart. How crazy is that advice? If I followed my heart on everything, I would be over 400 pounds, broke, and have my life in shambles. God tells us through Jeremiah that the heart is a problem until you get a new one from Jesus. The heart is deceitful above all else and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

Don't just follow your heart. Follow Jesus and let God tell your heart what it should desire.

You cannot make yourself desire what is right and follow through on it. God is the one who does that in you as you ask for His grace to be yours in salvation. And when you get a new heart, you need to express that heart in a new lifestyle pattern. This new life includes boundaries. Boundaries are good. Every single one of you here adheres to boundaries for the sake of enjoying life. If you were in a vehicle, you followed the boundaries of the road. If you were to run outside of the road lines around here, you may run into oncoming traffic or a deep ditch or into trees. You should appreciate driving boundaries.

Some of you are going to roast marshmallows over a fire pit this season. The fire in its boundaries helps fulfill your dreams of fall. But if that fire gets out of its boundaries, it has the ability to consume all your possessions. Are you putting boundaries in your life that God wants for you?

Maybe you remember the story of Jacob and Esau. When Esau was hungry, he was willing to sacrifice everything for the immediate satisfaction of soup. He was the one who pushed himself to the extreme limits of his abilities on his hunt. He was the one who failed to value his birthright. He did not put up wise boundaries in his life and fell

victim to strong desire. He literally gave up his greatest possession and responsibility for a bowl of soup. Don't choose the world's immediate satisfactions over God's love and plan for you.

g. Greed is a form of lust that is not sexual in nature but is a desire for power by means of possessions. BDAG defines this gloss as desire for more than one is due. Think of the OT term for coveting. That's what's being forbidden.

Be godly and be content with what you have. If you walk consistently with God and are content, then you have great gain. The world has neither godliness nor contentment.

- i. Now, we live in America. If you want something, you can usually get it, at least it is still the case at this time. You may face obstacles, but you can usually work your way past those obstacles if you are willing to sacrifice to get the things you desire.
- iii. But what do you desire? Is that desire driving you to worship God and serve others, or is that desire to try to make yourself feel complete? Greed can take over normal good desires.
- v. Let's say after church that you desire a sandwich. There are some good restaurants in the Short Pump area. If you have worked and earned money and set aside enough money in your budget to go eat a sandwich out, then you can go get the sandwich you desire. But what about when your desire for that sandwich overwhelms the other boundaries God has set up in your life for you? If you are so desirous of a sandwich that you push over little ladies on the way out the door and run people off the road to get the sandwich more quickly, then you have gone way too far.
- vii. What if your craving for food on a Sunday is for Chick Fil A? Then you will need to check that desire by the understanding that you are not allowed to get fresh CFA on Sundays. Boundaries should come into your mind that tell you that fresh CFA on a Sunday is beyond what you are allowed or due. If you were to break into a CFA and try to drop waffle fries into the fryer, your greed for CFA cravables has gone beyond an acceptable desire. Ephesians tells us that you may be in more danger than the grease fire that you cause.
- ix. Now, we joke a little about being greedy about food. But how much is too much in terms of financial gain? Money itself is not bad. It can be a great tool, but it is a terrible master. Look at what the Bible says about greed. It is itself idolatry. Greed is an obsessive pursuit of worship. It is an aggressive pursuit of serving a master, with the master being the creation, in outright rejection of the Creator.

Here are some thoughts that should send off red flags for you:

I just need one more than to feel complete.

I just need to have more than the other guy.

I want to make myself as comfortable as possible.

What I'm doing is for a good reason, so it doesn't matter how I get it.

I won't go too far in cutting corners or taking advantage of people.

Or simply, "I have to have this thing, or else."

Paul isn't starting us off with the prohibition of these sins in this passage. He starts us off with an appreciation of God's love.

Appreciate what you have in Christ. If you have gratefulness, you'll realize how great you have it. If you're not grateful, you'll become hateful toward what you have.

The answer to overcoming wrong desires is being filled with right desire, forcing out wrong ones. When you are filled with God's love, the world's lusts have no place in your heart.



**Don't be deceived by the  
world's comforts that go bad  
before their expiration date.  
(Eph. 5:6)**

3) Don't be deceived by the world's comforts that go bad before their expiration date. (Eph. 5:6)

Don't be deceived, v. 6 tells us. Don't be deceived.

Now, there are different kinds of deceptions. Illusionists make a living by deceiving people, the same people who pay the magicians to deceive them. This warning against deception is not about Penn and Teller. It is more so about the man trying to seduce a Christian woman with the flattery he tells her. This warning is against the idea social media gives you that your life is not good enough yet because you do not have the item, relationship, or lifestyle someone else has.

I literally saw a post yesterday that said, "My wife and I are finer looking than y'all. We have more money than you do. And we are closer to God than any of you." Well, at least someone is finally being open about what they are trying to communicate through their posts on FB.

A friend of mine shared an illustration about deception and the benefit of having a friend experienced in walking with God. They were hiking on the AT in Maine and were exhausted. They reached their campsite, which had a beautiful view with a scenic horizon. It was a glorious day. The ground, though, was hard. My friend being worn out and mesmerized by the view and wonderful weather, didn't feel the urgency of driving the stakes down deep. The other hiker knew those trails. He encouraged and insisted they drive the stakes down deep. At that height and location, very strong storms were known for developing quickly. And one came that night. The pretty scenery all around had deceived my friend into thinking their location had no danger.

Look, the world has been deceived by sin and wants you to be deceived along with them and get blown off your mountain top. But the things the world is delighting in do

not bring them satisfaction. They've been told how wonderful it is to go after whatever their hearts desire without boundaries. Something in them tells them it's rotten, but they've learned to be satisfied with rotten milk.

Have you ever put a milk jug in a refrigerator that stopped working? Say that your energy goes out overnight, or someone left the door open for several hours. By the time you get to the refrigerator, it seems like everything is fine with the fridge. A couple of days later you open the door to get the milk out for cereal. The expiration date is still good for a week. So, you pour it on your Wheaties. You put your spoon in to start eating, but the smell hits your nose before you even open your mouth. I hate the taste of sour milk. But when it is inside of the jug, it seems to hold the promise of creamy goodness.

The world wants the good that comes from God but without God and His will. Like drinking milk that is left out in the heat, they get a form of milk but a corrupted form. We're warned in 1 John to not love the world or the things of the world. 15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one's possessions—is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 And the world with its lust is passing away, but the one who does the will of God remains forever.

The comforts of this life are not going to last, even the ones that are acceptable and good. But the physical, emotional, visual lusts that the world endorses as good will turn sour even before they've been digested. The riches that we can accumulate will be taken as evidence one day, either testifying to how we used it to care for people or how we used people to care for ourselves. The desire for "more" will not last and will expire long before its promised date. But God and His love will never fade, never expire.

Christian, you have been given Jesus, proof that the Father is for you. You have been given the Spirit of God, who leads you to cry out, "Abba, Father!" You have a Father who has promised to never ever leave you. He has promised that you will never ever be too much for Him to handle. As the church we have a Savior and Groom who will always keep His promises and with whom there are never any regrets. We have taken the sweetness of the Spirit. Don't give up Jesus for the sake of the world's comforts.

There was a rich man, a very rich man who met Jesus. He was also very sincere and highly respectable. He actually asked Jesus if there was any sin he was committing that would keep him out of heaven. He said it more positively than that, saying he'd kept all the commandments as far as he could remember. Obviously, he had everything everyone desired because he had done everything right. Well, he had everything but one, everything but a relationship with God by means of Christ. So Jesus offered him two options: He could either have Jesus as master or the comforts of this life as his master. Sadly, that young man chose comforts. Look, I like A.C. just as much as anyone. If given the option between Jesus for eternity and a working thermostat for the next 50 years, choose Jesus. The thermostat in hell is broken and only gets hotter.

Your life now demonstrates whether your faith is in the one who gave Himself for you or if your trust is in the world's spoiled milk. Whose name is written over your life? What desires and character best describe you? Are you one who lives in the love of God or one who is dying for the world's lusts?

If you have placed your faith in Christ, you should delight in knowing that God loves you. If God has spoken, may I live accordingly.