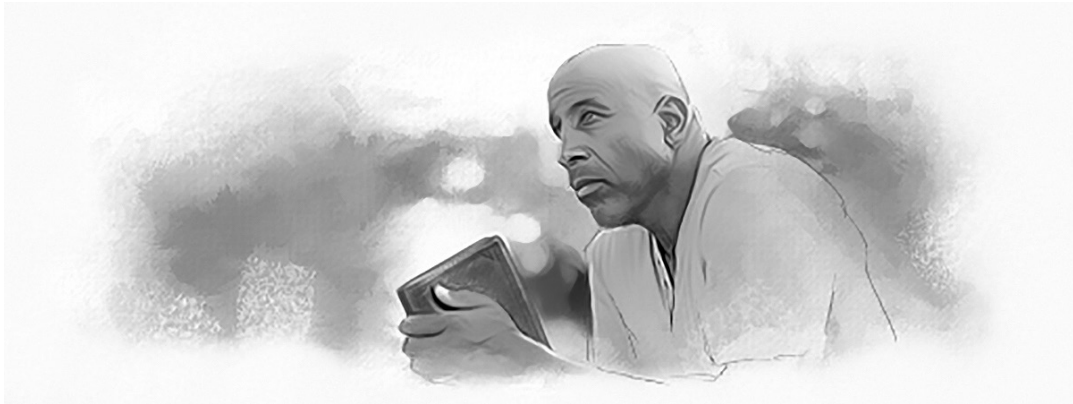


Living Wisely



SABBATH—AUGUST 19

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Ephesians 5:1, 2; Ephesians 5:7–10; Ephesians 5:11–14; Ephesians 5:15–17; Ephesians 5:18–20.

MEMORY VERSE: “So be very careful how you live. Do not live like [the same as] those [people] who are not wise. Live wisely. I mean that you should use every chance you have for doing good, because these are evil times. So do not be foolish with your lives. But learn what the Lord wants you to do” (Ephesians 5:15–17, ICB).



A buyer who came to see the jug knew the real history about the jug.

NOT LONG AGO, a glass jug went on sale in Great Britain. The seller said that the jug was made in France during the 1800s. The seller offered to sell the jug for \$200.00. A buyer who came to see the jug knew the real history about the jug. The jug was very old glass that was made by an Islamic glass maker. So, what was the jug really worth? About \$6.5 million dollars! But the buyer paid only \$200.00 for the jug because he knew something that the seller didn't know. The buyer knew the real value of the jug.

In Ephesians 5:1–20, Paul talks about the things that non-Christians thought were important in life. Non-Christians liked “dirty [about sex] jokes” (Ephesians 5:4, NIV) and “funny stories” that made fun of people (Ephesians 5:4, WE). They liked to get drunk at parties (Ephesians 5:18). They also liked to have sex that broke God's law (Ephesians 5:3, 5). Paul says that Christians are different. Christians love and “do all that is good and right and true” (Ephesians 5:9, WE) in Jesus. Paul tells Christians to make Jesus their treasure as they get ready in this life for heaven (Ephesians 5:15–17).

LIVING AS JESUS LIVED (Ephesians 5:1, 2)

Paul says that Christians should try to live as Jesus lived. What does Paul mean? Read Ephesians 5:1, 2 for the answer.

Paul tells the Christians in Ephesus to love other people as Jesus loved them (Ephesians 5:8, 15). Jesus showed how much He loved us when He died on the cross for our sins. His unselfish love (compare Ephesians 4:32) is our example (Ephesians 5:2). Paul tells us four things about Jesus' dying for us:

1. Jesus died for us because He loves us (Ephesians 5:2) and because God the Father loves us (Ephesians 5:1).
2. Jesus took our punishment. He is our Substitute. He took our place on the cross.
3. Jesus' death is an offering, which He made to God.
4. God accepts Jesus' death, which is the same as a sweet-smelling offering (Ephesians 5:2; compare Exodus 29:18; Leviticus 2:9; Philippians 4:18).

Some of the new Christians in Ephesus are in danger of going back to their old behavior in the past. Paul doesn't want their bad behavior to destroy the good work they do for God (compare 1 Corinthians 5:1–11; 1 Corinthians 6:12–20; 2 Corinthians 12:21). So, in Ephesians 5:3–5, Paul tells his readers about God's rules for sex.

During New Testament times, the citizens of the Kingdom of Rome were guilty of many sex sins (read 1 Corinthians 6:9; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 4:17–19; Colossians 3:5). Rich people gave feasts and parties. People sinned at these parties. In Ephesians 5:3–14, Paul warned about these sins. These sins included getting drunk, sex talk and entertainment, and other sins. At the same time, there were many Roman citizens who didn't like or accept this evil behavior. The Romans made lists for good behavior and bad behavior and tried to follow their own rules (Ephesians 5:21–6:9; Colossians 3:18–4:1). Paul wanted Christians to avoid the evil behavior of the non-Christians. Paul also wanted Christians to be careful to live holy lives. Then non-Christians would see their good behavior and respect them and their beliefs.

How do Paul's words about sex sins and evil behavior help us today?



Rich people gave feasts and parties. People sinned at these parties. In Ephesians 5:3–14, Paul warned about these sins.

CHILDREN WHO BELONG TO THE LIGHT (Ephesians 5:7–10)



God sends many warnings before He sends His punishment (Revelation 6:12–17; Revelation 16:1–16; Revelation 19:11–16).

Paul writes, “Don’t let anyone fool you with words that are not true. God gets very angry when people who don’t obey him talk like that” (Ephesians 5:6, ERV).

In the verse before Ephesians 5:6, Paul warns us about what will happen to people who sin without feeling ashamed of their behavior or sorry for the wrong things they do: “Be sure of this! No person who does sex sins or who is not pure [clean] will have any part in the holy nation [kingdom] of Christ [Jesus] and of God. The same is true for the person who always wants what other people have. This [always wanting] becomes [the same as] a god to him” (Ephesians 5:5, NLV). So, we who want to be part of God’s kingdom shouldn’t behave the same as people who aren’t part of His kingdom. Paul worries that Christians will be tricked into thinking that sex sins are okay to do (Ephesians 5:6). If we believe that sex sins are okay, then we are in danger. God’s anger will punish the ones who do sex sins (Ephesians 5:6).

God’s anger is a difficult idea for us to understand. We must remember that God’s anger isn’t the same as human anger. As humans, our anger comes from our feelings (compare Ephesians 4:31). So, our anger isn’t always fair. God’s anger isn’t a feeling; His anger comes from His love for His law and from His anger for sin. So, God’s anger is always fair and holy. His anger is His answer to humans’ stubborn wish to do evil. God sends many warnings before He sends His punishment (Revelation 6:12–17; Revelation 16:1–16; Revelation 19:11–16). God’s warnings show us His mercy. We should have suffered God’s anger because we are sinners (Ephesians 2:3).

Why does Paul tell Christians not to join sinners in doing sin? Read Ephesians 5:7–10 for the answer.

We belong to God (Ephesians 5:8). So, Paul tells us our behavior should show that we are God’s. We should try to learn about the things that make God happy (Ephesians 5:10). Non-Christians try to find pleasure in sex sins. They also want more things than they need (Ephesians 5:3). God’s plan for His children is different. We must not live to please ourselves. We must live to please God (Romans 12:1; 2 Corinthians 5:9; Hebrews 13:21). Our lives should show other people how much Jesus loves us (Ephesians 5:2).

WAKE UP, SLEEPER! (Ephesians 5:11–14)

Read Ephesians 5:11–14. What powerful warning does Paul give us in these verses? What does this warning mean for us as Christians today?

If we want to understand Ephesians 5:11–14, we must understand two important rules that Paul gives us:

1. Live a life that honors God. Show everyone around you that you belong to God (Ephesians 5:8; also, read Ephesians 5:1, 2, 4, 9–11, 13, 14).
2. Don't do sex sins or live a life of sin (Ephesians 5:11; also, read Ephesians 5:3–8, 12).

Ephesians 5:8–10 helps us to understand better Ephesians 5:11. Non-Christians watch the things we say and do. So, our lives must show other people that we belong to God (Ephesians 5:8). Then Christians will show other people that God is the light. “This light gives us truth. It makes us right [accepted] with God and makes us good” (Ephesians 5:9, NLV). This advice is Paul’s plan for showing other people God’s love. As Christians, we must show that sin is bad. We do that by living a holy life.

Ephesians 5:13, 14 tells us that Christians can win non-Christians to Jesus by living holy lives: “But the light [God and His Bible truth] makes clear [easy to see] how wrong those things are. Yes, everything is made clear by the light. This is why we say,

‘Wake up, you who are sleeping!

Rise from death,

and Christ will shine on you’ ” (Ephesians 5:13, 14, ERV).

When sinners understand that their evil behavior causes them to lose everlasting life (Ephesians 5:5, 6), then they will understand that they must change. When they have this experience, they can be saved if they accept Jesus.

Ephesians 5:14 is a poem. In this poem, Paul tells Christians to wake up from spiritual sleep and allow Jesus to change their lives. This poem helps us remember Isaiah 60:1–3, which is written to God’s people, Israel. So, we also may understand that the poem in Ephesians 5:14 is asking Christians to wake up. Paul wants God’s people to remember that they are workers for God. They must shine for Jesus the same as lights in this dark earth.

How does your life show Bible truth to other people?



Our lives must show other people that we belong to God (Ephesians 5:8).

GETTING A GOOD BARGAIN (Ephesians 5:15–17)



Paul says we should “grab” these bargains as fast as we can while we wait for Jesus to come back.

Paul ends Ephesians 5:1–20 with encouraging advice in verses 15–17 and in verses 18–20. Paul says, “So be very careful how you live. Live wisely, not like [the same as] fools” (Ephesians 5:15, ERV). Paul then says the same thing again in a different way: “So do not be foolish with your lives. But learn what the Lord wants you to do” (Ephesians 5:17, ICB). In between these two verses, Paul tells his readers to “use every chance you have for doing good” (Ephesians 5:16, ICB).

Think about Paul’s advice to live wisely (Ephesians 5:15–17). How is living wisely different from living as a foolish person? Also, what does Paul mean when he says, “Make the best use of your time” (Ephesians 5:16, NLV)?

In Ephesians, Paul talks about how Christians should live or not live (Ephesians 2:2, 10; Ephesians 4:1, 17; Ephesians 5:2, 8). Paul wants Christians to live wisely. So, they must be careful with the decisions they make in life. Ephesians 5:17 helps us understand how we may live as wise people. Wise people learn and “understand what the Lord wants” them to do (Ephesians 5:17, NIV).

So, what does Paul mean when he says, “Make the best use of your time” (Ephesians 5:16, NLV)? Do you see the word written as “make”? This word comes from the verb “**exagorazō**” in the Greek language. “**Exagorazō**” comes from the verb “to buy” and means “to get a good bargain.” Paul is saying that Jesus offers us “a good bargain.” Jesus’ good bargain is mercy and forgiveness for our sins. Another good bargain that Jesus offers us is everlasting life. Paul says we should “grab” these bargains as fast as we can while we wait for Jesus to come back. The word “time” in Ephesians 5:16 comes from the Greek word “**kairos**.” “**Kairos**” is a chance to do something. So, Paul is saying that now is our chance to use our “time” wisely before Jesus comes back. “Time” also means the hard times that we live in today. We live in hard times because the days are filled with evil and trouble (Ephesians 5:16; compare Ephesians 6:13; Galatians 1:4). Of course, the devil makes this time difficult for us, too (Ephesians 2:2).

As Christians, we must be the same as “bargain hunters” in the marketplace. Of course, we can’t buy God’s mercy. But we can take what God freely offers us in Jesus.

SPIRIT-FILLED WORSHIP (Ephesians 5:18–20)

In Ephesians 5:18–20, Paul talks about worship. What does Paul say Christians should do when they worship?

In Ephesians 5:1–20, Paul gives Christians advice about alcohol. Paul tells his readers not to get drunk with wine. Paul says that getting drunk is wrong. The Old Testament warns against getting drunk, too (Proverbs 20:1; Proverbs 23:29–35). Evil things happen when people get drunk. Drunk people say things they shouldn't say. They do bad things. Getting drunk weakens their love for God. Paul encourages Christians to fill their hearts with the Holy Spirit. Spirit-filled Christians will talk about God. These Christians will give God thanks. They will sing praises to Him.

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, there will be peace and agreement in the church (Ephesians 4). Our worship of God will be different, too. Our worship won't be selfish (Ephesians 5:1–18).

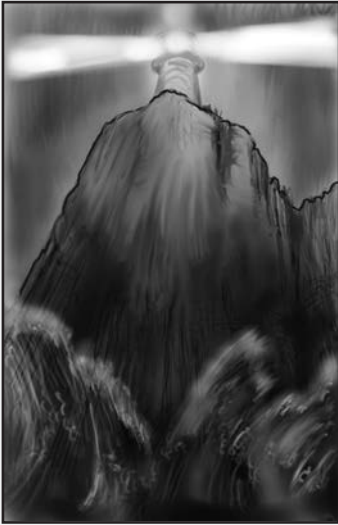
Do you see in Ephesians 5:18–20 that Paul talks a lot about music? Music is an important part of worship. So is praise. Also, read Colossians 3:16; compare Acts 16:25; James 5:13. These verses, also, show us that music is an important part of our worship of God.

When church members sing, it is the same as talking to each other (Ephesians 5:19). At the same time, we must remember that when we sing, we are praising God. As part of our worship, we give God thanks (Ephesians 5:20), and we praise Him with songs (Ephesians 5:19). We offer both our songs and our praise to God the Father in Jesus' name (compare Colossians 3:16). That is why Paul says, "Encourage each other with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" (Ephesians 5:19, ERV). Do you see the words "spiritual songs"? The word "spiritual" comes from the Greek word "**pneumatikos.**" We understand this word to mean songs filled with the Holy Spirit or songs that He leads us to sing. So, Paul shows us in Ephesians 5:18–20 that we worship all Three Persons of the Godhead when we worship. The Godhead is the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

Think about the words to your favorite spiritual song. How do these songs help you understand Jesus' love better?



Music is an important part of worship.



Paul believes that when Christians live for God, they will shine the same as light in the dark.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: As we read Ephesians 5:1–20 again, we see that Paul takes a strong stand against sin and evil. These sins include sex sins. Paul also says that Christians must not joke or talk in a way that doesn't honor God. Paul refuses to accept evil behavior in the church. Paul encourages Christians in Ephesus to be examples of holy living. Their lives must show that they are God's children (Ephesians 5:1–10). Paul believes that when Christians live for God, they will shine the same as light in the dark. Then they will lead their neighbors away from evil behavior to God's mercy and Bible truth (Ephesians 5:11–14).

Paul wants church members to make a new promise to serve God fully while they wait for Jesus to come back (Ephesians 5:8; also, read Ephesians 5:15, 16). Paul also wants Jesus to live in the hearts of church members and to be with His church (Ephesians 5:14) when they worship. Then Jesus' death for them will fill them with love for God (Ephesians 5:1, 2). Then the Holy Spirit will fill their hearts (Ephesians 5:18), too. Their worship experience will be filled with joy as they sing praises to the Lord Jesus Christ and to God the Father. Christians also should celebrate their hope for the future. Their hope comes from everything God has done for them and will do for them in Jesus (Ephesians 5:18–20).

When we understand Ephesians 5:1–20 in this way, we will see that these chapters are more than a set of commands about Christian living. These verses are an announcement to Christians about who they are and how they must worship in the end times. More than that, these verses become an invitation to Christians to “grab” all the “bargains” of mercy that God offers until Jesus comes back (Ephesians 5:16).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Paul tells us to be holy. How can we be holy when there is so much sin and evil behavior around us today?
- ② How can we learn what pleases God (Ephesians 5:10) and His plan for us (Ephesians 5:17)?
- ③ Paul says Christians must not talk about sex sins (Ephesians 5:3, 4). Some people misunderstand Paul. They think Paul means we must accept sex sins in the church. Why is this idea wrong?

DIAPERS ON MY GROCERY LIST

On Friday morning, I went shopping with my husband, Peter, at our local grocery store in Beirut, Lebanon. Peter went to buy apples and granola bars for the Pathfinders' hike that weekend. Peter and I serve as Bible workers overseas. We teach life science at Middle East University.

I was looking for dish soap. I looked down the row where diapers were sold and saw someone shopping for diapers. I thought to myself how hard it must be for some people in Lebanon to get diapers. That's because Lebanese money has lost more than 90% of its worth in two years. Goods cost so much money now. Everything keeps getting more expensive. More than 80% of the Lebanese people are now poor.

All of a sudden, I heard a command in my head. "Buy a pack of diapers." I was surprised by this thought. I asked, "Lord, is that You? Why should I buy diapers? My youngest child is 10 years old!" I heard the command again. "Buy a pack of diapers." I started to walk away. I said, "Lord, I don't know anyone with a baby who needs diapers." The command came into my thoughts again. "Buy a pack of diapers."

I walked back to the row of diapers and prayed. "OK, Lord, I'll buy the diapers. You'll just have to show me later who they're for. What size should I get?" I grabbed a pack of size 3 diapers and continued shopping.

When my husband and I met at the car, I said, "Don't be surprised if you see a pack of diapers in the trunk. The Lord told me to buy them. They're a gift. But I don't know who they're for right now." We drove home.

The next day at church, I saw a friend whose wife works with families who have come to Beirut to escape the war against them in their home countries. I asked my friend, "Do you think your wife knows someone who needs diapers? The Lord told me to get some yesterday. I don't know who God wanted me to buy them for." My friend promised to ask his wife.

That evening, I got a text from my friend. He wrote, "When I told my wife your story about the diapers, she started to cry. Tomorrow she'll be visiting two families who need diapers. May we pick up the diapers from you tonight?"

A short while later, I hugged my friend and handed her the diapers that God put on my grocery list. My friend told me that she works with more than 20 families who need diapers and can't afford them. Now I put diapers on my grocery list more often.

Thank you for your offerings that help share the Good News about Jesus in the Middle East and around the globe.

INSIDE
Story
by AMY McHENRY



I hugged my friend and handed her the diapers that God put on my grocery list.

