

Easy As 1-2-3



Ephesians 5:1-20 ¹

It's As Easy As 1-2-3

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Overall Understanding

Paul shows the sharp contrast between the ungodly lifestyle and the believer's lifestyle. The fact that he includes this instruction implies that some Christians in Ephesus needed to hear it.

At any time in a church, there will be people who were recently born again who, though they have been made holy and righteous, their lifestyles and communications will still resemble that of the ungodly. They need to be instructed in righteousness, BUT

Notice that this chapter is in context with the entire letter in which Paul has first laid out for them who they are and what they have in Christ. He has emphasized the love of God and our love for one another.

This chapter should not lack this context. Otherwise, it will sound like a sermon about behavioral modification or a list of dooties and don'ties. It could be taught in a way that sounds like not living one way and living another way is how we are saved. The context must always be included so as to avoid legalistic living. Teaching law empowers sin.

Paul is basically saying, "You have been changed, so forsake the way you used to live."

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Ephesians 5:1-20²

Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.

Because of what Paul had just taught them.

You are a beloved child of God. Imitate your Father just as a beloved child imitates his.

²And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

Live in love. As Christ loved us by giving Himself, love each other.

³But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; ⁴neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

Here is a literal translation of the above verse with Greek definitions added in parentheses.

But fornication (porneia: harlotry, including adultery and incest) and all uncleanness (impurity, physically or morally) or covetousness (fraud, extortion, greed) let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; ⁴neither filthiness (shamefulness, obscenity), nor foolish talking (silly talk, that is bafoonery) nor coarse jesting (vulgar wit), which are not fitting (proper), but rather giving of thanks (grateful language to God as worship).

The above should not characterize a beloved child of God, but new believers accustomed to behaving this way might still have some of these behaviors hanging on. Thus, the exhortation. However, it is not done in a vacuum but in the context of who they now are, beloved children of God. The rationale for not behaving this way is not to avoid hell, but to please the Father.

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⁵For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷Therefore do not be partakers with them.

Here is a literal translation of the above verse with Greek definitions added in parentheses.

For this you know, that no fornicator (whoremonger, male prostitute), unclean person (impure, lewd, demonic, foul), nor covetous man (eager for gain, a defrauder), who is an idolater (an image worshipper), has any inheritance (patrimony, heirship, possession) in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶ Let no one deceive (cheat) you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath (anger, indignation, vengeance) of God comes (is coming) upon the sons of disobedience (obstinate and rebellious unbelief). ⁷ Therefore do not be partakers (participants) with them.

This is how the sons of disobedience live. We are sons of God, sons of obedience because we have believed in His Son. The sons of disobedience have no inheritance in the kingdom of God. So, do not participate in their ways. Forsake them entirely. Sin no longer has dominion over us because we are not under law but under grace. You are free from these things. Live free.

⁸For you were once darkness, but now *you are* light in the Lord. Walk as children of light

Here is a literal translation of the above verse with Greek definitions added in parentheses.

For you were once (in past times) darkness (shadiness, obscurity), but now (presently, henceforth and hereafter) you are light (luminousness, shining) in the Lord. ² Walk (live, deport/ behave as, be occupied with, walk about) as children (daughters and sons) of light (luminousness, shining)

We WERE darkness, but NOW, we are light in the Lord.

The word "light" is phōs, referring to light itself, not a mere lamp. Expositors says: "The completeness of the change is

indicated again by the use of the abstract term – so possessed and penetrated were they by that truth that they could be described not simply as enlightened but as themselves now light. And this 'in the Lord,' for it was in virtue of their fellowship with Christ their fellowship with Christ that this new apprehension of things came to them, transforming their lives."-Wuest

⁹(for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), ¹⁰finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.

The behaviors listed are fruits of darkness; the fruit of the Spirit is the fruit of being light in the Lord. Goodness, righteousness, and truth now are who we are.

¹¹And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose *them*. ¹²For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. ¹³But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. ¹⁴Therefore He says:

“Awake, you who sleep,
Arise from the dead,
And Christ will give you light.”

And have no (nothing, never, none) fellowship (share in company with, co-participate in, partake of) with the unfruitful (barren) works of darkness (shadiness, obscurity), but rather expose (admonish, convict, convince, tell a fault, rebuke, reprove) them. ¹² For it is shameful even to speak (talk about, describe, boast) of those things which are done by them in secret. ¹³ But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light (to shine or make manifest, especially by rays, luminousness), for whatever makes manifest is light. “Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, Christ will give you light.”

The instruction in this verse is not to shun unbelievers, but rather not to participate in their ungodly deeds. In fact, it is important to notice that the "works of darkness" are what we are to avoid, not the people who are doing these acts.-AWMI

“And stop having fellowship with the unfruitful works of this darkness, but rather be rebuking them so as to bring out

confession and conviction, for concerning the things done in secret by them, it is shameful to be speaking.-Wuest Expanded Translation

¹⁵ See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, ¹⁶ redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Don't walk about in darkness, rather in light, not as fools do. Instead of wasting your time as you did formerly, use your time wisely.

¹⁷ Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Therefore, do not be unwise (foolish, mindless, stupid, ignorant, egotistic, rash, unbelieving), but understand what the will of the Lord is.

⁸ And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,

The verse does not say to refrain from drinking wine, but to not be drunk with it.

There is nothing to gain from being drunk. It is bad for your health and wastes your mind. Over time, it dulls your effectiveness.

The alternative to being drunk with wine is being filled with the Spirit. Notice, it does NOT say be DRUNK with the Spirit. To be filled means completely full, needing no more.

¹⁹ speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What a beautiful picture, as opposed to what was just described. It is what our lives can be like.

*Speak to each other in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.
Make melody in your heart to the Lord.
Give thanks always for all the good things the Father has given.*

Coming Up in Chapter 5:18-33

In these chapters, Paul addresses the marriage relationship. Christian marriages are to be a thing of joy, but often they are not. Paul gives clear teaching about how being changed by God changes our relationships. You will enjoy hearing about how lovely marriage can be when grace is in place.