

Mar 16/25 - Walk in Love - Leader's Guide

Reading: Ephesians 5:1-21

1. If you grew up in church, what kind of guidelines or rules did they have around sex, alcohol, language, etc? If you didn't grow up in church, what kind of guidelines did your household have?
Time for sharing/ice-breaking – this doesn't need to go deep, although it may come with some baggage for some, so be sensitive to that.
2. What are two reasons it is difficult when Paul starts getting into the specifics (nitty-gritty) of how to live a Christian life? Have you found it difficult to discuss these passages in the past, for either or both of these reasons?
Two reasons these passages are challenging are that we don't always know when Paul is speaking to a specific cultural context, and when he is giving a general principle for Christian living; and when he is giving a general principle for Christian living, it makes demands on us that may be uncomfortable or difficult.
3. Why do you think Paul begins in verse one by calling his readers beloved children? How can this shape our response to each other and to the rest of the passage?
It is our status as beloved children that frees us up to respond to the things of the world with joy and thanksgiving, as well as responding to each other with grace and forgiveness. None of us gets it perfect, and all of us are beloved children.
4. How does the context into which Paul was speaking shape your understanding of this passage?
Paul was speaking into a context where sex and alcohol were both used in religious gatherings as a way of connecting to the divine. He was also concerned with unity, speaking to a church that was made up of great diversity. Both of these things can help us understand why Paul mentions sexual immorality, drunkenness, and language the way he does.
5. Paul was primarily concerned with how the body of Christ walks together in love and mutual submission, and how we relate to material things affects each other. What are some ways that we can support each other in 'building each other up in love'?
Pretty much everyone has wrestled to some degree or other with sex or alcohol or language or all three. Acknowledging that enables us to respond to each other in grace and love, supporting those who struggle in different ways. Take some time to flesh out what support might look like.
6. Is there a way that your own quest for personal piety (or freedom) has had a detrimental or hurtful effect on the body of Christ, or have you been hurt by other Christians' quests for personal piety or freedom? Is there forgiveness and/or repentance to be sought there?
Allow space for conversation or simply private reflection.