

A Summary of Christian Ethics

The fifth exhortation is to get rid of vices and to adopt three virtues (vv. 31-32). One could summarize this as follows: practice good will, not ill will. The command “Get rid” assumes a responsibility of believers to act (presumably with the aid of the Spirit).

What are the things Christians should rid and the virtues we should practice? (vv. 31-32)

What quality should characterize our relationships with others? (5:1-2) Do you suffer from poor personal relationships and are prone to saying things that hurt people due to bitterness and hatred? Have you imitated Christ and forgiven all who have wronged you? Pray that God will help you to understand and experience Christ’s self—sacrificing love, so that you may be able to respond in love to God and in love to your fellow neighbor.

SUMMARY

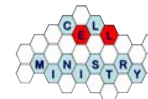
To apply this text:

- a. Watch your tongue. Make it speak truth, use it to build, not to destroy.
- b. Watch your hands and feet. Make them respect property and put them to work so that you can give to the needy.
- c. You are part of those in Christ. Nurture people gently. Do nothing from malice and anger.
- d. You belong to God and His Spirit is in you. Treat others as He has treated you. Forgive and love. We can grieve the Holy Spirit because of our words or actions.

Ephesians

Week 9

[Cell-group Discussion]



Ephesians 4 : 25 - 5 : 2

Eph. 4:24-5:2 details in practical terms what the Christian life in Eph. 4:20-24 looks like. The specific issues treated are truth, anger, theft, speech, and love. Holy living is not simply about living with God but also about our relationships with others.

Lying

In vv. 25-32 we find five exhortations to Christians regarding Christian conduct. Each exhortation has three parts: a negative command, a positive command, and the reason for the positive command. The first exhortation (v. 25) is to stop deceiving. Instead the Christian should speak truth, namely, what is in harmony with reality. The reason is that the Christian belongs to and must function honestly in the Church. Truthful speech is essential to unity in the body.

What is the difference between telling the truth and telling lies? Do we have to tell all the truth to everyone? Is it right to leak out what is confidential? Do you lie?

Anger

The second exhortation is to avoid sinning when angry and to deal with sin quickly if it does accompany anger (vv. 25-26). Anger is not sinful in itself (see John 2:13-16). There is such a thing as righteous indignation (see 5:6; Mark 3:5). Still it is easy to lose control of our anger, to let it control us instead of controlling it. Anger becomes sinful when it is inappropriate. The way to deal with sinful anger is to confess it as sin (see 1 John 1:9). If apologies to other people are necessary, we should offer them quickly as well (see Deut. 24:13-15).

Why should we not let anger fester but deal appropriately with it?

Do you often lose control while in anger and strike out with hurting words or with your hands? How do you manage your anger? How long does it take before you make peace with the other party? Why?

To Harm or to Help?

The third exhortation is to refrain from stealing but to work so we will have something to share with the needy (v. 27). Paul did not mention other benefits of work here such as providing for one's own needs and doing something useful. He emphasized the most noble of motives here. Stealing covers all forms of misappropriation. Christians should not be thieves but rather be philanthropists. The person who did wrong in order to meet his own selfish needs must now work in order to contribute to someone else's need. This is an example of dying and rising with Christ.

The fourth exhortation is to speak good things as well as to do good things (v. 28). Anything that injures others or causes dissension in the body is unwholesome. Christians should use words to build up people rather than to tear them down. Words can give grace (help) in the sense that they communicate encouragement and direction and thus help the hearer to do right.

In the past six months, how have you been supportive of those (both Christians and non-Christians) in need? If you cannot answer this question, what has held you back from helping the needy?

How do you build others up with encouraging words without coming across as insincere? Recall how you might have sinned or hurt people with your words?