

## **SESSION 9 (Joint): A MAN WHO LOVES RIGHT (Ephesians 5 v 1-14)**

### **THE BIG IDEA:**

God's people are to have a giving love, not a greedy love. This means avoiding all sexual immorality—no sex outside marriage, and no treating sex like a joke in how we talk about it.

**Notes:** Teenagers are all very different – and that's certainly true when it comes to sex and relationships. A 14-year-old guy may not have faced these issues in his own life yet. An 18-year-old may already have several sexual relationships behind him. A teenager might be sexually active, or have been brought up never even to mention it. In leading this session, you will need to gauge, firstly, where your teenager is at, and what issues they and/or their friends are likely to be facing in this area. And you will also need to be sensitive about the level of trust there is between you and him. You may know him well enough to have earned the trust to ask difficult questions in addition to what is in the booklet; or you may not have earned that level of trust yet. Also, this session may throw up lots of issues that you want to stop and think about as you work through the questions. It may be that it's a good idea to split this session into two, to give yourselves time to deal properly with any questions or issues that crop up.

Finally, it is possible that during this session your teenager will want to tell you something confidentially. Since you are in a position of trust as the legal adult, don't promise not to tell anyone else—he may be about to tell you something that you would need to share with your pastor. If anything crops up which you are concerned about, do speak to your pastor in confidence in the first instance. You might also like to read your church's advice on child protection issues.

### **GUIDANCE FOR QUESTIONS:**

1. This is another image which makes the same point as the old self/new self picture. A Christian is someone who has passed from darkness to light. Notice that while we were once darkness all by ourselves, but we're made light "in the Lord"—it's knowing Him that makes us "light", not anything about ourselves.

2. Through grace (2 v 8). Not through what we do, or don't do. It's not by our works (v 9). The idea is to begin this study, and end it (Q12) by remembering that we're saved by what God has done for us, not by the way we live for Him.

3. **Correction:** The booklet should say verses 8-10, not verses 9-10.

V 8: Live as children of light. Since it's the Lord Jesus who *is* light, you might like to point out that this means being like Jesus.

V 9: Aim to show goodness, righteousness (living how God says) and truth in how you live.

V 10: Find out how to live in a way which pleases Jesus.

4. TABLE:

v 3 (a): Not even a hint of sexual immorality.

This means steering well clear of any form of sex outside marriage. (If the teenager has never come across why Christians don't have sex outside marriage, you might like to turn to Genesis 2 v 21-25, where we see the perfect relationship: marriage (v 24) is followed by "becoming one flesh" or sex—marriage comes before sex.)

v 3 (b): Impurity.

This means pretty much the same as sexual immorality above!

v 3 (c): Greed.

The context here is how we think about and "do" sex. So it's viewing intimacy with someone else in terms of what we get out of it, rather than how we can love and serve the other. (We return to this idea in Q10.)

v 4 (a): Obscenity.

Saying things about sex that make sex sound dirty or abusive or crude.

v 4 (b): Foolish talk.

Talking about sex in a way which ignores or denies what we know about sex – that it's a good, precious gift from God.

v 4 (c): Coarse joking.

Joking about things to do with sex

**Note:** Often for teenage boys, talking about sex with friends comes well before actually having any form of sex! So your teenager may well need to be challenged by verse 4, even if he's not yet at the stage where v 3-type actions have become a realistic possibility for him. You might also want to point out that there's a link between how we talk about something and how we end up thinking about and acting in that area of life. We mustn't think that talking about sex in a flippant, coarse, cheapening way won't have an effect on our actions when it comes to sex.

5. You might like to get the teenager simply to write the answer down in his booklet, rather than having to tell you. This may help him to be more honest.

6. Probably because Paul wants to drive home the seriousness of sinful sexual behaviour. Our culture tells us to be careful with sex because of sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies—the consequences of getting it wrong are a horrible disease or a baby you don't want (or an abortion). The Bible tells us that the consequences of ingrained, unrepentant wrong behaviour are much worse than that—"God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient" (v 6). Paul is not messing about here—he wants to remind us that our behaviour in this area is a serious matter, not to be taken lightly.

BUT this doesn't mean we cannot be forgiven. We all deserve God's wrath for our disobedience—2 v 3-5 reminds us that in Christ Jesus, God offers us new life and forgiveness. Paul's point in 5 v 5-6 is that someone who goes on doing the things mentioned in v 3-4, without being sorry, asking for God's forgiveness, and honestly trying to change, is actually not living with Jesus as King—they are not a saved Christian. But if we are living like that, we can always ask for, and receive, forgiveness by turning back to Jesus as King.

7. Being thankful (to God). Because sex is a gift from God. We're not never to talk about it—but when we do talk about it, we're to do so in a way which acknowledges that sex is great, special, and God's gift to us. You might like to encourage the teenager, next time his non-Christian friends are talking about sex in a verse-4 way, to say something that mentions that sex is great, and God-gifted.

8. Christ's. By GIVING Himself up for us as a sacrifice—ie: by dying on the cross to take the punishment of God's wrath that we deserve.

9. Imitating it.

10. "Gives", and "greedy".

11. This is worth taking some time on in discussion.

12. We're saved by God's undeserved kindness in giving us Jesus to die for us and give us new life. We mustn't ever think that because we've messed up, we can't be forgiven or be Christians any more. When we sin, we need to thank Jesus for dying and rising for us.

It may be that during the session your Bible-reading partner (or you yourself) has realised that there needs to be serious, and difficult and costly, changes in his life. Do encourage him both that he can be forgiven for what he's got wrong, but also challenge him that he can't simply go on as he is—there needs to be a turning away from sinful behaviour.

13. Again, let the teenager (and yourself!) fill this in without sharing.

If you haven't already, at this stage remember to encourage the teenager to fill in "old self" and "new self" behaviour on his two tops in his booklet (p64-65).

#### SCENARIOS:

Mike needs to be challenged by verse 4.

Joel and Sarah may not be having full sex, but they are not obeying the command to avoid even a hint of sexual immorality. Anything that "isn't really sex" probably *is* sexually immoral. Better to avoid anything that even *might* be immoral, and save it to be enjoyed in marriage. Plus, notice that there is some greed in Joel's outlook—he wants to do things with Sarah so that he can look good in front of his friends. And Joel needs to remember verse 4, too—it's not right, or fair, to discuss Sarah with his mates.

Matt needs to listen to what God has said—and what He's said is that it's wrong. Sometimes (often!) our feelings are not good guides to right and wrong. And if we talk to God about something, we must be prepared to listen to Him too—and the way He speaks to us is primarily through His word. If His word says sex outside marriage is wrong (and it does!), then it's wrong. Matt needs to decide who he will obey: himself, or God?