

***International Bible Lessons Commentary***

***Ephesians 5:1-14***

***John 1:1-5***

***International Bible Lessons***

**Sunday, December 23, 2012**

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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, December 23, 2012**, is from **Ephesians 5:1-14** and **John 1:1-5**.

**Questions for Discussion and Thinking**

**Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lessons Commentary* (also known as the *Bible Lesson Forum*) on Ephesians 5: 1-14 below. **Study Hints for Thinking Further** give possible hints to answer the five questions below to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the **International Bible Lessons Commentary** website and below. For additional **International Bible Lesson Commentaries**, see the complete and comprehensive **International Bible Lessons Commentary Index**. The weekly **International Bible Lesson** is posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught at **<http://InternationalBibleLessons.org>** and in **The Oklahoman** newspaper.

***International Bible Lesson Commentary***

***Ephesians 5:1-14***

**(Ephesians 5:1) Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children,**

The Apostle Paul wrote about Christian belief and faith in Ephesians chapters 1-3. Then, in Ephesians chapters 4-6, Paul continued with his practical and moral application of the Christian faith. Jesus Christ perfectly demonstrated the love and intelligence of God in all of His relations with His heavenly Father and all others (including His disciples, family, friends, inquirers, and enemies). We learn how, why, and what Jesus did in the New Testament. Paul called Christians the beloved children of God, so Christians need to imitate the moral character of God their heavenly Father just as Jesus Christ did when He walked on Earth.

**(Ephesians 5:2) and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.**

Jesus Christ gave of himself totally, sacrificially, and unselfishly. Jesus did all He wisely could to help each person, because He lived in love (rather than just express love on occasion). He demonstrated the love of God toward each person (even when He shocked some of the religious leaders with His pointed calls to moral accountability so they might repent and come to believe in Him—as some did). Likewise, to imitate Jesus, Christians need to live in God's love and love God and others, even at the risk of offending those

who need to change their behavior and come to saving faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior—this may require sacrifice, a sacrifice to God through serving others as Jesus did. Following the Holy Spirit's leading according to the Bible, Christians need to act wisely, lovingly and sometimes sacrificially to help others. Rather than make an offering of fragrant incense to God on occasion in worship, Christians need to dedicate their whole life as an offering to God and follow God's wise commands and guidance in the world (which is more fragrant to God than the odor of burning incense). Every unselfish act in the service of God and others is a sacrificial act of giving. People can choose between living selfishly or sacrificially. Because of the joy set before Him, Jesus acted sacrificially, and so can all believers who follow His example.

**(Ephesians 5:3) But fornication and impurity of any kind, or greed, must not even be mentioned among you, as is proper among saints.**

Even though Ephesians 5:3-5 were omitted from the *Uniform Bible Lessons* this year, these verses are vital at this point in Paul's letter. Even though believers may think they love and sacrifice for others and that is all God requires of them; actually, God expects the followers of Jesus to live holy and pure lives just as Jesus does and our heavenly Father does. The Holy Spirit will never lead a follower of Jesus, a beloved

child of God, to do any of the sins listed and forbidden by the Bible. Immoral actions and immoral speech should never be part of a believer's life, for God has set apart all true believers to live pure lives for Him in word and deed.

**(Ephesians 5:4) Entirely out of place is obscene, silly, and vulgar talk; but instead, let there be thanksgiving.**

Paul listed greed along with sexual sins. Coveting and greed can lead to some sexual sins. Some may think they are faultless, because they do not do certain acts or have a greedy heart, but the Bible also forbids us to talk about certain topics and forbids obscene, silly, vulgar talk (even some jokes). Believers can avoid some obscene speech by walking away when they hear it. A conversation can change when believers begin giving thanks to God for His gifts and guidance; giving thanks to God can lead some to change their talk to a better subject.

**(Ephesians 5:5) Be sure of this, that no fornicator or impure person, or one who is greedy (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.**

In order to receive an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God, a person must become and live as a beloved child of God by imitating God, his heavenly

Father, and Jesus Christ, the Son of God (see Ephesians 5:1). Those who worship idols demonstrate their unbelief in the true God by living as morally impure people. In this verse, Paul wrote about idolatry as a way of living or way of life that was in direct contrast to imitating Jesus Christ and our heavenly Father in their pure moral and spiritual character. You cannot enjoy God and the kingdom of God, or be admitted into the joyful presence of God here and now or in the hereafter, if you are an idolater or practicing sin that you do not regret or repent of or seek deliverance from in order to live a holy life in Christ Jesus. Idolaters and impure people would not enjoy any inheritance in holy the kingdom of God.

**(Ephesians 5:6) Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes on those who are disobedient.**

Empty words have no content, meaning, truth, or value. Empty words may be a false promise that a “believer in God” or a “believer in Jesus Christ” can live an impure life apart from God and avoid eternal separation from God; however, these empty words are not true; so, believers should not trust in false promises and live disobedient to God. The “wrath” of God is the anger of God at sinful, destructive practices. The love of God directs His wrath to judge wisely and punish effectively those who live disobedient to the truth of God and reality.

**(Ephesians 5:7) Therefore do not be associated with them.**

Some individuals, churches, fellowships, groups, and other organizations and religions teach that people can live disobedient to God's revealed will and way of salvation and sanctification as taught in the Bible and still inherit eternal life and enter the kingdom of God. Paul warned that we should not associate with, or affiliate ourselves with, these people or groups. If we associate with them, we may come to think as they do. If we associate with them, even if we say we disagree with them, we may mislead others by our wrong example.

**(Ephesians 5:8) For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light—**

Those who live disobedient to God and His revealed will in the Bible, those who refuse or will not even try to imitate God in their personal life, live in darkness mentally, morally, and spiritually. When we come to saving faith in Jesus Christ, we see the light (or truth) and we enter into the life of truth, and we seek to remain in the light by studying and living according to God's truth as revealed in the Bible. As Paul explained in Ephesians chapters 4-6, Christian faith leads to living as God's beloved children, who live in the light.

**(Ephesians 5:9) for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.**

Jesus Christ is the light of the world. He did not, and He does not, hide His light and life, which is one reason people come to know and follow God in Jesus Christ. Jesus always did and does what is good, right, and true. If Jesus' followers imitate Jesus, then they will strive to live doing what is good, right, and true. They will pray for God's guidance and power to do what is good, right, and true in every situation and potential situation. They will pray for Jesus to save them and help them overcome every sin that besets them and every temptation they face, so that even under the pressures to sin they can do what is good, right and true.

**(Ephesians 5:10) Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord.**

Christians, freed from slavery to sin by Jesus Christ and living in His light (truth), look and pray for opportunities to do what will please the Lord inside and outside the Church. They will use God's gifts in ways they could never have imagined before they began to live and do according to what they hoped and prayed would please the Lord. Deciding to live pleasing to the Lord can help believers discern what is good, right and true, from what is evil, wrong, and false.

**(Ephesians 5:11) Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.**

Fruitful works include a variety of practices and professions that are good, right, and true (see verse 9 above). Unfruitful works may seem successful in this world of darkness, but they involve doing what is evil, wrong, and false. Not only are we to avoid these works, but God calls us to expose evil practices (with love for all and the wisdom God gives us in answer to prayer and as the Holy Spirit leads us).

**(Ephesians 5:12) For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly;**

Unhappily, many television episodes, movies, and songs, promote and glorify what is shameful even to mention. Paul did not list all of these shameful behaviors, for shameful practices become more shameful and worse for those enslaved to them and those they abuse as time goes by and evil takes a stronger hold on those who live in darkness. What some used to do in secret, others now show publicly on television, in movies, and even parade proudly in the streets. If Paul had made a list of wrong behaviors, some would have justified their shameful deeds by claiming that what they were doing was not on Paul's list of shameful deeds or that his list was now "out of date."

**(Ephesians 5:13) but everything exposed by the light becomes visible,**

The light of truth shows how evil practices destroy those who practice them and harms those abused by them. The light of truth exposes how many in high places of power will lie, murder, cheat, steal, and try to do even worse in secret. Those who practice evil have become examples of every deed and practice that the followers of Jesus Christ must avoid. Unhappily, some evil deeds are legal in some societies, but that does not make them less evil and harmful, as the light will soon expose.

**(Ephesians 5:14) for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”**

If we turn from practicing evil and turn to Christ to save us from sin and evil, we will rise from spiritual death and the light of Christ will shine on us. We will become visible in the darkness. We become the light and truth of Jesus Christ (see verse 8 above) and we will bear the fruit of light (see verse 9 above). Some will turn from darkness to light as they see true Christians in the light of truth. Some will see the light of Christ in the lives of believers around them, and they will turn to Christ and seek a life in Christ themselves.

## **John 1:1-5**

**(John 1:1) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**

John began his gospel by writing about the Word and God, two different identities. The Word is *with* God indicates two identities. The Word *is* God indicates one Being. The Word was God in the beginning. God did not create the Word. Later in John's gospel and other parts of the Bible, we learn that the Word is a Person who is God, and by including the Holy Spirit, we learn that the one God is three Persons.

**(John 1:2) He was in the beginning with God.**

In John chapter 1, we learn that Jesus Christ, the Word, was with God in the beginning. Later, Jesus Christ, the Word, was born into the world. Jesus Christ was God in the beginning, before God created anything and before Jesus Christ was born. Jesus Christ did not become God, because Jesus Christ was always God in the beginning (or before any beginning). John wrote that God is more than one Person; indeed, the one God is three Persons.

**(John 1:3) All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being**

All “things” that came into being came into being “through him,” the Word. God and the Word did not come into being, because they always existed. God and the Word, and the Word was (and is) God, always existed, and God and the Word created everything else that exists. Not one thing can come into being unless God brings it into being. When human beings create something, they always create from the matter and the human mind that God created, because human beings cannot create something out of nothing. Only God can create something out of nothing, as our Creator and the Creator of all things.

**(John 1:4) in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.**

God, Jesus Christ, the Word (the Word is Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ is God) is life and the source of all life. Jesus Christ gives life to all people and He is the light (truth) in which people can live and grow in every way. People who live according to the teachings of Jesus Christ live according to the truth and sound reason as revealed by Jesus Christ and as enabled by Jesus Christ.

**(John 1:5) The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.**

Satan brought spiritual darkness into the world in which all people live. Jesus Christ is the light (truth) that shines in this darkness, and the darkness has

never overcome the light of Christ or the light of truth – even when Jesus Christ died a sacrificial death on the cross, because Jesus Christ rose from the dead to save the children of God.

**See also the [Commentary on John 1:1-14](#) for Sunday, March 11, 2012, from the International Bible Lesson & Forum.**

### **Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further**

1. What might happen to Christians and to churches if they promoted only the Bible's teachings on belief and faith?
2. What might happen to Christians and to churches if they promoted only the Bible's teachings on moral and immoral behavior?
3. How do Paul's letters and the Bible teach about belief, faith, and behavior in the best ways?
4. According to Ephesians chapter 5, what will distinguish a beloved child of God from others?
5. Where can you find the fruit of the light (see Ephesians 5:9)? Where else might you find the fruit of the light?

Write your comments, suggestions, and thoughts on the [Bible Lesson Forum](http://biblelessonforum.com/) at <http://biblelessonforum.com/>. Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson* at [International Bible Lessons](http://internationalbiblelessons.org) at <http://internationalbiblelessons.org>.

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