

# An Old Approach to a New Idea

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[ 0 : 00 ] Great. That's my prayer as I speak, that it would be Christ in me and Jesus with me as I speak to you, that he would speak to us all this morning.

So I wonder, what are you enjoying about this journey through Ephesians? Are you dipping in and out of it? Are you fully in each chapter, kind of wondering what's coming next?

Next, maybe you're visiting today or you might be exploring faith and I think maybe for all of us who are reading this through, we would really recommend this book.

It is full of wisdom and so much to notice and so much to wonder about. I thank God every day that he has given us brains to wonder with him and also with others.

And isn't that the beauty of church communities and our home groups? I urge you to connect in if you're not already connected in. We do this together with one another.

[ 1 : 24 ] So what have you been up to this week? I imagine that would be a lot of different answers. Well, I had the joy of going to North Yorkshire for less than 24 hours.

I'm renaming it a speed retreat. I'm thinking of writing a book. It was like the opposite of what a retreat should be. It was our staff retreat.

I needed to travel later because of interviewing on Tuesday. But my goodness, can't God do wonderful things? How he can stretch time.

The most beautiful place I utterly recommend going there is called the Jonas Centre. Look it up. I've already got Russ on it. He's like, oh yes, I'm going there. But the word I came away with, I'm already emphasising to you this morning.

With. And we're going to come back to that through this time together. So in Ephesians, we've reached this point in Ephesians 5, where we connect with Paul's message to the church.

[ 2 : 35 ] In a deeper way, I think. And we find ancient wisdom here that is rich and relevant to us today. On the 6th of April, 2025.

So I've got beside me my message version of the Bible. I love this translation. I spend often a lot of time in that.

And in the message translation of this chapter, the opening bit is called Wake Up From Your Sleep. And as we explore God's word this morning, I'm going to be referring to the message translation.

So I wonder, what does waking up look like for you in the morning? Or maybe those closest to you? I see that face. Do you leap out of bed?

Do you hear the alarm and snuggle back in a little bit? Kind of wishing you could stay there.

[ 3 : 43 ] Perhaps you're one of those people I admire who can be a bit robotic. Alarm, up, routine, this is get into the day. I dream of being like that.

Or perhaps, does it feel like an intentional choice, an invitation from God? Wake up.

Get up. Take one more step on this adventure. The gift of life that he has given us. I used to love when I was teaching that song, one more step along the way we go.

Well, here in this passage is the invitation to truly do that with intention. To be awake.

To be alert. And to notice what he is showing us. What the Holy Spirit is showing us. And to listen.

[ 4 : 43 ] And to respond. By following and imitating Jesus. And don't forget. He is with us.

Every step of the way. So we're going to unpack the main themes in this passage. As I came to it, I felt in my spirit the thing to do was, let's just go through it.

Let's see what it's saying. And it's saying so much. And it will be saying different things to each of us. We come at this collectively, together, gathered here.

But the Holy Spirit will draw our attention to what he wants to say to each of us. The home group that I lead, we meet every Friday lunchtime.

It's a really beautiful space. And we follow the practice of Lectio. We always use the Bible reading from the week before. Anyone's welcome, by the way.

[ 5 : 45 ] And we always read that passage through three times. And we pause. And before we read it, we ground ourselves. And we invite God to be showing us.

Like, almost like getting those words to shimmer. The ones he wants us to notice. That's my prayer this morning. As we go through this, God will draw our attention to what he is wanting us to notice this morning.

Here we go. So, verses 1 and 2 are really clear on this imitating God. It says in the message version, watch what God does.

And then you do it. Like children who learn proper behavior from their parents. Mostly, what God does is love you.

Keep company with him. With him. And learn a life of love. Now, I don't know about you, but I actually noticed, first and foremost, the little challenge to me as a parent here.

[ 6 : 56 ] As children who learn proper behavior from their parents. I was like, oh, that's quite a thing. As a parent or as an adult who seeks or who has a passion to see young people, younger generations have rich, safe, steady role models.

That's us, folks. What a challenge. But we get to do that by watching Jesus, learning from him every day.

And it goes on to say that his love is extravagant and we are to love like that. Let's pause on that word. I wonder, what does it mean to you to love with extravagance?

I ask myself, what would it look like to love more extravagantly? And then verses three to six bring caution.

It says, don't allow that love to turn into lust. First, setting off on a downhill slide. Anyone being on a downhill slide?

[ 8 : 16 ] Anyone being on an uphill slide? I was thinking, I think they always like generally, the idea is, it's downhill. My husband Pete is obsessed with a slide at the moment.

We're just doing a project for a place in Cornwall. And he is determined we're going to get a slide next to the staircase. I'm like, Pete, focus.

Let's just have stairs. But a slide is fun. And it's pretty speedy. Unless you get, you know, the wrong clothes on and you get stuck on it.

So annoying when you're a child. But generally, you get on a downhill slide and you're at the bottom before you know it. Don't allow love to turn to lust.

Setting off on a downhill slide. That is speedy. How would you define the difference between love and lust? By the way, I have noticed I'm asking you a lot of questions this morning.

[ 9 : 15 ] That's very intentional. I would suggest that lust is mainly driven by physical attraction or desire.

It's often fleeting. It can fade quickly and we move on to something else to replace it. It's serving us. Love is deeper.

It's a deeper connection. A more encompassing emotion that includes care and respect and commitment.

Jesus is love. Jesus is love. Trying to remember not to say things too quietly.

Wave at me if you can't hear me. And I think this is one of those places in God's word where we need to check in with ourselves. To be really clear that this passage is not about us taking a look around and judging other people's behaviour.

[ 10 : 21 ] This is about ourselves checking in regularly with our Father God with how we are doing at imitating him. And loving, truly loving extravagantly.

And this is not easy in our human condition. Let's face it. It can be hard work not to get distracted.

I was recently asked a really challenging question. When you look at others, people around you, do you generally respond in your internal self with a kind of, do you know what, they're really just doing the best they can.

They're really trying their hardest. Or do you respond with a sense of, well they could be trying a bit harder.

They could be doing better. It really challenged me. And I felt particularly reminded that one of the fruit of the Holy Spirit, what we see when the Holy Spirit is at work, is gentleness.

[ 11 : 34 ] It made me question, is my heart soft enough to be gentle towards others? Or has it been hardened by life's experiences and a bit shut down?

Empathy and acceptance as we connect with people creates a safe space for God's Spirit to be at work. This approach is proven to be healing to our internal wounds, our trauma.

It's proven. So let's be gentle with ourselves and with others. Let's take time to really see the person in front of us.

Again, when you're teaching and you're stressed and your head is so full, it's so easy to see this blur of 30 plus young people.

And it's a challenge to see them as individuals beautifully created, loved by our Father God.

[ 12 : 43 ] Let's pay attention kindly. Bring curiosity. Listen to someone else's story and not judge.

Remember, the chap who was here a couple of weeks said, Nick, he said, we don't see the internal battles that people are fighting.

So verse four goes on to say, by the way, I'm going to speed up a little bit because I know we're going through 21 verses, but I just want us to really get this at the beginning.

Verse four goes on to say, Thanksgiving is our dialect. I love this. Our dialect. That sense of together.

A culture. The church's identity is Thanksgiving. We should be grounded in this shared language, this shared experience.

[ 13 : 44 ] And we should notice and feel uncomfortable, that discomfort when we step out of that, which we do. We are human.

But we should just check ourselves. Are we consistent and constant with this sense of being thankful to Jesus first?

And by verse seven through to 14, we are really getting to the grace of God's incredible love for us. It's like a breathing room for the soul.

It says in verse eight, in the message version, you groped your way through that murk once, but no longer. You're out in the open now.

The bright light of Christ makes your way plain. So no more stumbling around. Get on with it. I love that. I like God saying to me, get on with it, Kate.

[ 14 : 45 ] The good, the right, the true. Figure out what will please Christ and then do it. Ooh, there's something for me to have to do.

Figure out what will please Christ and then do it. Pete and I watched a great film the other night. It's called 13 Lives.

It's about the story in 2018 of 13, 12 lads in Thailand, football team and their coach. And they went through a structure of caves on a day that should have been fine to do that.

The rain, the monsoon came early and they were trapped. They were completely trapped seven hours into this cave, into a system and everyone thought that they had probably perished.

But they were found by some expert divers, a couple of guys from Britain actually, but teams came from all over the world and they were rescued in the most miraculous way.

[ 15 : 48 ] They could not have got themselves out. There was not a chance. They absolutely would have died. But because the person, the people, equipped and willing to go through to them and rescue them meant they were brought back into life, into the open, into the light.

And I can see on your faces, I don't need to explain for me the power of the metaphor of what Jesus has done for us. It is done.

We are brought into the light. We are forgiven. Do we live in it with intention every day to notice it? And the role of light is transformational, isn't it? In communities, the light of Christ's spirit changes lives.

That's my bread and butter every day. I work for an organisation called Transforming Lives for Good. Every day we meet and we pray that lives will be transformed because of the love of Christ through the local church, through the local church, stepping out and being in community.

[ 17 : 14 ] I wonder, when have you most recently seen this light, this exuberant love transform lives?

Notice and give thanks. And finally, verses 14 to 21, come with even more challenge but with encouragement.

So, watch your step. Use your head. Make the most of every chance you get. Don't live carelessly or unthinkingly.

I thought, hmm. Instead, Paul's encouragement to us is to live spirit-filled lives full of worship, full of thankfulness, prayer and obedience to God and to love those around us who we recognise with soft and gentle hearts.

Maybe numbing themselves through addiction or through choices that are not serving them well because they don't know this love.

[ 18 : 44 ] we have the joy and the privilege of sharing this love with others. Let's do it. So, in summary, I feel like this part of Ephesians and Ephesians 5 could feel like a bit of a tick list.

We do this, we don't do this, we do this, we don't do this. But let's remember, Romans 6, verse 14 reminds us of our freedom to live. We live under grace, not under law.

The legalistic requirements and obligations of the Old Testament no longer are the main kind of rule book that we live by because of Jesus.

God's unearned favour and gifts through the power of the cross David's just prayed that so richly for us and over us.

It leaves us empowered to live lives for Christ, pleasing to him. and so I wonder what do we need to release this morning?

[ 20 : 09 ] Is there something God is showing us he wants us to bring more into the light? Is it something we're doing, an attitude we have, something that is compelling and diverting and takes too much of our tension away?

Let's ask ourselves that. Let's ask God to show us. And secondly, we serve a God who is truly alive and whose word is alive.

This book is the only book that when we open it and read it, revelation is truly present through the power of God's Holy Spirit.

We're promised that. Let's spend time in his word. It transforms us to be carriers of the light of Christ. We draw near to him, we do life with him.

In Matthew 11, Jesus urges us, come away with me. Come and rest, live out of that place of resting in him.

[ 21 : 29 ] When our souls and our brains rest, we come into life with more clarity and intention, more awake and more alert.

And in Matthew 5, Jesus says, you are here to be light. And I love in this translation it says, bringing out the God colours in the world.

It's all there. Jesus is at work. We get the joy of joining in and drawing out, drawing attention to the God colours in the world.

We do this with him, not in our own strength. So I encourage us all, I talk to myself, to read and re-read this passage in a quiet space, or listen to it, or come along on Tuesday night.

This Tuesday, Mike is away, but Philip Janadu, he's a former leader of Metro Church in Bristol, Woody's Metro Church.

[ 22 : 41 ] He's coming, Mike's asked him to come and lead on Tuesday night. He'll be a fantastic speaker. He now works for care for the family. Find ways to just pause a little longer and notice more than I've invited us to notice this morning.

And encourage each other, have accountability, accountability. Find those trusted, close, safe relationships that you can journey well in faith with.

We are not alone. Jesus is with us and we do this together. Amen. Amen.