

# The Christian Life: Do, Avoid, Why

**Ephesians 5** (NLT)

Elizabeth Daniel

specifically: vv 1-12

<sup>1</sup> Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. <sup>2</sup> Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered Himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.

<sup>3</sup> Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God's people. <sup>4</sup> Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes — these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God. <sup>5</sup> You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world.

<sup>6</sup> Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins, for the anger of God will fall on all who disobey him. <sup>7</sup> Don't participate in the things these people do. <sup>8</sup> For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light! <sup>9</sup> For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true.

<sup>10</sup> Carefully determine what pleases the Lord. <sup>11</sup> Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, expose them. <sup>12</sup> It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret.

vv 15-30

<sup>15</sup> **So be careful how you live.** Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. <sup>16</sup> Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. <sup>17</sup> Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do. <sup>18</sup> Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit, <sup>19</sup> singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts. <sup>20</sup> And give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>21</sup> And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

<sup>22</sup> For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of His body, the church. <sup>24</sup> As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything.

<sup>25</sup> For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her <sup>26</sup> to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. <sup>27</sup> He did this to present her to Himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. <sup>28</sup> In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. <sup>29</sup> No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. <sup>30</sup> And we are members of his body.

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## The Message....

Christians are called to live a transformed life that mirrors God's character, and demonstrates, through specific attitudes and actions, our relationship with Jesus. This way of living is not about earning salvation (which we cannot do), but demonstrating the love of Jesus, fostering growth, and witnessing God's work in the world. This involves specific actions to embrace and to avoid, all the while understanding the why of it all.

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### I. The Foundation and **Purpose** of Christian Living

- \* Our purpose is to live a life worthy of God's calling in a spirit of gratitude; to reflect God's character and serve Jesus in the world, thereby transforming our hearts and minds.
  - \* This transformation is not just accumulating information.
  - \* It is fueled by God's grace, received through faith, prompting a thankful response to what God has done for the world through Jesus, as salvation is a gift, not something earned by good deeds.
- \* Believers are considered God's workmanship.
- \* How God Works in Believers:

- \* It is God (specifically the Holy Spirit) who works in us to will and to act.
- \* God alone can save a soul, heal a heart, or fix a life.

## II. What Christians Are to **Do** in Their Lives

- \* Love one another.
  - \* Love is an underlying ethic taught by Jesus; it is loving our enemies and doing good to those who hate us.
  - \* Love fulfills all law (Rom 13:10) and is considered the royal law (James 2:8).
  - \* Love for God profoundly affects one's obedience to God's commandments.
  - \* We are to be filled with love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and genuine faith.
- \* Engage with God's Word:
  - \* Pay close attention to what you hear, for the closer you listen, the more understanding you will be given.
  - \* Approach Jesus' teaching as if carrying a big basket to be filled with understanding and enlightenment.
  - \* Dedicate time, attention, and submission to Jesus' words, including personal devotions, regular church attendance, and intentional application of Scripture.
  - \* Ask for wisdom, and God will honor the request.
  - \* Respond to God's Word through patient listening and applying its truth, which leads to obedience. The Word is powerful and transforming.
- \* Pray:
  - \* Prayer is a normal and natural part of Christian life.
  - \* Christians need to pray to acknowledge our daily dependence on God.
  - \* Prayers are inspired and led by the Holy Spirit. Confess sins and ask for forgiveness, as God promises to forgive.
- \* Seek Forgiveness and Forgive Others:
  - \* Christians must freely forgive others because Jesus has forgiven us.
  - \* The way a Christian forgives others evidences our faith in Jesus.
- \* Resist Temptation:
  - \* Recognize that temptation is an ever-present reality and a serious threat.
  - \* Sin can disguise itself as "second-nature" habits that require time and repetition to unlearn; Christians must learn behaviors fit for God's kingdom. Remember, too, sin loses its power when brought into the light.
  - \* Pray God will lead us away from temptation and provide a way of 'escape' to follow Him.
- \* Endure Trials with Joy:
  - \* Trials and struggles are part of the Christian life.
  - \* Persevere with patience through trials and temptations, understanding that these tests strengthen faith and contribute to maturity. Patience and perseverance are essential tools for stronger faith.
- \* Practice Generosity:
  - \* Give ourselves and our resources to God out of gratitude for what He has given us, sharing what we have received with others and investing in God's work.
  - \* Generosity is a biblical antidote to greed, involving the cheerful, and often secret, giving away of valued resources.
- \* Serve Others: Follow Jesus' example of service, surprising others with simple acts of kindness and concern.
- \* Walk Wisely and Redeem the Time
  - \* We are to <sup>15</sup>Be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. <sup>16</sup>Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. <sup>17</sup>Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do (Eph 5:15-17). This implies a thoughtful and intentional approach to daily life.
  - \* Make a conscious effort every day to understand what the Lord wants us to do, then make the best use of our time to do it. We live in evil days and time is short.
  - \* This pursuit of God's will is a continuous journey, as exemplified by Abraham's response to God's call to an unknown land, trusting in divine guidance despite the risk.
    - \* Spiritual disciplines (journaling, simplicity, study, etc.) can aid in this discernment process, helping individuals recognize God's presence and guidance in their everyday lives and understand how their unique personality influences their spiritual practices.
  - \* Make the most of every opportunity to share God's love and Jesus' message. This is a privilege and responsibility for every believer.

- \* Always be Thankful
  - \* Thankfulness is rooted in God's actions, particularly the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, and the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in us.
  - \* Thankfulness serves to balance other forms of prayer, such as intercession and confession, fostering our holistic prayer life.
  - \* Always give thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name (including nature and character) of Jesus.
  - \* Rejoice always. Pray continually. Give thanks in all circumstances.
- \* Imitate God
  - \* Be imitators of God (Eph 5:1).
  - \* Strive to reflect God's glory, as we are made in His image (his character, etc.), and to be exactly what God intended us to be.
  - \* Our love should not be mere words but show itself through self-sacrifice, like Jesus' sacrificial giving.
- \* Walk in love
  - \* Just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.
  - \* Distinguish ourselves from the world around us, acting according to God's standards rather than worldly standards.
  - \* Walk in love, as Jesus taught us to walk (Eph. 5:1-2).
    - \* When we fail, He is willing to work with us; He knows how to forgive.
    - \* But make no mistake about it — God wants us to grow continually in the fullness of life in Jesus.
- \* Be filled with the Spirit.
  - \* Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord.
  - \* Seek to live out the Fruit of the Spirit:
    - \* love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5:22–23).
    - \* These qualities develop through reliance on the Holy Spirit, even through painful times and failures.
- \* Submit to one another out of reverence for Jesus.
- \* Cultivate a New Self:
  - \* Put on the new self, empowered by the Holy Spirit. We are created in the likeness of God in righteousness and holiness.
  - \* Pursue holiness as a continuous process, characterized by humility, love, and surrender to the Holy Spirit's work. Exercise self-control and restraint.
  - \* Use the spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit to serve Jesus and help the church body grow in faith.
- \* Relate to Others with Love and Honesty:
  - \* Be filled with love that originates from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and genuine faith.
  - \* Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and might, and love your neighbor as yourself (known as the royal law).
  - \* Speak truth to one another, recognizing that believers are all members of Christ's one body.
  - \* Care for the poor and powerless. This is a crucial characteristic of God's covenant and is not optional.
  - \* Be forgiving and live at peace with others, demonstrating humility, gentleness, and patience, and bearing with one another in love.
  - \* Understand that forgiveness is also an ongoing process; continually ask God for forgiveness for sins and, in turn, mirror His love by forgiving those who sin against you.
- \* Think about positive things:
  - \* "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things" (Phil 4:8).
- \* Deny Self and Follow Jesus:
  - \* This means willingly dying to one's own agenda, identity, and approach.
  - \* Show loyalty to Jesus by being willing to give up everything, even to the point of death.
- \* Seek God's Kingdom and Righteousness:
  - \* Desire and search for God's Kingdom and His righteousness as a priority. When this is done, essential needs will be met.
  - \* Practice righteousness through prayer, generosity, and fasting.
  - \* Be hungry and thirsty for righteousness, an intense spiritual desire for a deeper relationship with God.

- \* Handle Wealth and Resources Responsibly:
  - \* Be a generous and wise steward of the wealth God grants.
  - \* Do not store up wealth here on earth — "you can't take it with you."
- \* Be Prepared and Be a Witness:
  - \* Be prepared spiritually, mentally, and physically to face challenges, trials, and opportunities.
  - \* Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you for the reason for the hope that you have, doing so with gentleness and respect.
  - \* Be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Salt preserves from corruption and adds flavor to life. Light illuminates and exposes what is there.
  - \* Live differently than the world expects. Your faith should be perfectly visible in all ordinary activities, not just in church.
- \* Love Enemies and Be Merciful:
  - \* Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. This is how you act as true children of your Father in heaven, who gives His sunlight and rain to all.
  - \* Be merciful, showing empathy and identifying with others. This includes being merciful to those who are weaker, poorer, those who mourn, being forgiving, thinking the best of others, and caring for all lives.
- \* Be Humble and Gentle:
  - \* Be meek (humble), submitting to God's will and conforming to His Word.
  - \* Be strong, yet humble, gentle, patient, and longsuffering with others.

### III. What Christians Are to **Avoid** in Their Lives

- \* Permissive attitudes: "Anything goes," "All paths lead to God," "I can do whatever I want. So can you!" and so on.
- \* Obscene talk, foolish talk, or coarse joking, as these are out of place.
- \* Bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander, envy and covetness, and every form of malice must be removed.
- \* Lying and deception must be replaced by speaking the truth.
- \* Stealing is to be replaced by honest work to help others and oneself.
- \* Hypocritical and Empty Prayers:
  - \* We are not to pray in order to be praised by others or to use empty, ritualistic phrases.
  - \* True prayer reveals what one believes about God.
- \* Self-Righteousness: God desires those who seek His forgiveness, not those who exalt themselves.
- \* Being Judgmental: Even when disagreeing strongly, listen first and contribute perspectives only as needed, remembering that we do not fully know another person's story.
- \* Denying the Reality and Value of Our World Around Us: While having an otherworldly focus, Christians should not ignore earthly matters or undervalue creation.
- \* Favoritism based on material wealth.
- \* Blaming God or others when facing troubles.
- \* Defensiveness and anger when confronted with the truth.
- \* Failure to control one's speech, which can have damaging effects.
- \* Ignoring God during times of illness, happiness, and/or suffering, or ignoring the role of the Christian community during trials or joys.
- \* Sin, temptation, and distractions from the faith.
- \* Serving Two Masters:
  - \* Do not try to get ahead in this life by accumulating wealth or lusting for it.
  - \* Do not view wealth in comparison to others, which leads to greed.
  - \* Avoid making wealth an idol or misusing and misallocating earthly wealth.
- \* Hypocrisy and Seeking Earthly Praise:
  - \* Do not do good deeds publicly to be admired by others, as you will lose reward from God.
  - \* Shallow religiosity or having a religious appearance without actual obedience, as it is considered worthless.
  - \* Avoid mocking Jesus by living a life of pretense, such as feigned worship.
  - \* God cares about the motives behind good works.
- \* Do not talk yourself out of what Jesus is talking you into.
- \* Unforgiving Attitudes:

- \* Do not refuse to forgive others, as God is displeased by those who refuse to forgive.
- \* Do not hold onto bitterness.
- \* Sin:
  - \* Flee from whatever or whomever causes us to sin against God.
  - \* Do not make excuses or try to justify bad decisions.
  - \* Recognize that no sin is harmless; it bites like a deadly poisonous snake.
  - \* We are not to let the sun go down on our anger.
  - \* Do not harbor ill will, smolder, seethe, or seek revenge. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult.
  - \* Do not use frivolous swearing or oaths; let your "Yes" be "Yes" and "No" be "No".
- \* Worry is useless for the future, hazardous to health, affects judgment, and is blind. It questions God's goodness and faithfulness.
- \* Do not judge others, or you will be judged by the same standard.
  - \* First get rid of the "log" in your own eye before trying to remove the "speck" from your friend's.
- \* Do not hide Jesus' light within you; there is no such thing as secret discipleship.
- \* Delayed Obedience is Dis obedience.
- \* Immorality, Impurity, Greed, and Idolatry
  - \* Ephesians 5:5 directly warns that "No immoral, impure or greedy person — such a person is an idolater — has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God".
  - \* Greed is an ongoing temptation that can manifest in various forms.
    - \* It causes individuals to seek security in the wrong places and elevates personal desires above God's.

#### IV. **Why** This is Important

- \* Divine Example and Nature:
  - \* Christians are to be holy — set apart from the ways of our world.
  - \* God's love is seen in many ways, most notably His act of sacrificing His Son for sinners.
  - \* Christians, born again by God's work, learn to love as God loves.
- \* Spiritual Transformation:
  - \* Believers have been saved by grace through faith, not by works; we are God's handiwork created to respond to God's grace with good deeds.
  - \* We are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.
  - \* The Holy Spirit renews us from the inside out, enabling us to grow in faith.
- \* Union with Christ:
  - \* Being united with Jesus means dying to sin and rising to a changed life.
  - \* The Holy Spirit within us enables a healthy spiritual life and victory over our sinful nature.
- \* The church is the body of Christ, sharing in His victory. God's purposes for His church should produce a new quality of life among believers, leading us to humility, patience, and mutual helpfulness.
- \* Eschatological Perspective:
  - \* The shape of this world is passing away.
  - \* This eschatological conviction influences Paul's ethical imperatives, urging believers to live detached from worldly attractions and devote themselves to "the Lord's affairs".
- \* Forgiveness and Grace:
  - \* God has forgiven us; we should, then, forgive others.
  - \* God's grace has cleansed our past and made us new. He poured out the Holy Spirit on us to justify us with God's righteousness.
  - \* We have assurance of salvation through God's grace and mercy on the Cross, not by our good deeds..
- \* Following Jesus' teachings leads to peace and rest for our souls.
  - \* This peace co-exists with tribulation and struggle.
- \* Only those who actually do the will of the Father will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.
- \* Living out these principles allows your good deeds to shine before others, causing them to praise our God. Our lives and deaths are meant to bring glory to God.
- \* Being salt and light has an antiseptic influence on life, defeats corruption, adds flavor, and provides guidance to those who have lost their way. It allows us to extend God's invitation to a world lost in sin.

- \* Jesus has overcome the world, and believers, by living as He taught, can have peace and overcome the world through Him.
- \* Believers have the hope of salvation, an inheritance of eternal life.
- \* This way of living allows for communion with God, strengthens trust, and aligns desires with His righteous will.
- \* Authenticity of Faith: Faith without deeds is dead; sincere practice proves a person's sincerity and love.
  - \* Right living leads to spiritual blessings when we yield ourselves to the Lord and fulfill His purpose for us.
  - \* It is the fulfillment of the royal law (loving God and neighbor).
  - \* By remaining obedient to God's will, we receive mercy from God's judgment.
- \* God's Word is powerful and transforming.
- \* Submitting to God's wisdom promotes peace and unity and helps to root out selfishness.
- \* The purpose of Christian instruction is for us to be filled with love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and genuine faith.
- \* Fostering Spiritual Growth and Transformation
  - \* Spiritual disciplines are understood as practices that facilitate spiritual growth and ultimately transforms us to be more Christ-like.
  - \* Foundational to Christian living is a deep and accurate understanding of God's defining attributes — such as His holiness, wisdom, goodness, grace, love, and sovereignty.
    - \* This understanding equips us to know ourselves, interact with the world, leading to holy living, worship, evangelism, and service.
  - \* Engaging in spiritual practices helps individuals grow in truth, wisdom, hope, and love and allows us to live into our faith.
- \* Deepening Intimacy and Relationship with God
  - \* Thankfulness is a spiritual discipline that directly nurtures intimacy with God.
  - \* God wants our prayers and is pleased by them, especially when offered through Jesus.
  - \* Communal worship, including congregational singing, is seen as inherently creedal (shaping belief) and ecclesial (related to the church as a whole), proclaims His church to the world.
- \* Living in Holiness and Purpose in a Fallen World
  - \* The world is characterized as evil, requiring Christians to live with wise discernment.
  - \* Understanding God's holiness compels us to appreciate His saving work and strive to follow Him.
  - \* Christians are called to shine Jesus' light into a dark world.
- \* Personal Transformation and Purpose
  - \* The ultimate goal is to become more like Jesus.
  - \* This process recognizes God's calling and addresses areas in one's life that need renewal.
  - \* It cultivates humility and sensitivity to God's leading.