

## Pastor Lloyd's Sermon Notes from 17/07/2022

### EPHESIANS 5 - IMITATE ILLUMINATE INTOXICATE AND INTERPRET

Three key words sum up this chapter. And I could think of no better than Pawson's commentary in which he uses these three words – Imitate, Illuminate and Intoxicate....to which I've added another word; Interpret.

#### **1. Imitation**

Imitate means to copy - it's a parent's best and worst word. There is nothing that pulls on heartstrings more than when your kids try to imitate you. And nothing more devastating than when they imitate you at your worst. In the early verses of this chapter, we find that imitating God will mean we do the kinds of things he does, loves the things he does, and turns away from what is foreign to him. So in this chapter, there is a list of behaviours that we are not to participate in like filth and immorality (v5), greed and idolatry are replaced by being thankful to God. (V6) Don't be surprised when people try to excuse their sins: some people try to justify participating in behaviours in these lists because they can then reconcile their lifestyle and their misbeliefs.

This goes to the core of what I want to call – Interpreting the Bible. It amazes me how people can make the Bible mean whatever they want. We have all done it by quoting some obscure verse! I remember when I was just converted I found Samson in the Bible and he had long hair – and my pastor was trying to get me to have a haircut – see it's in the Bible I said. So is slavery, so dancing around with no clothes on, stoning people, living in caves, and leaving earth in a fiery chariot.

OK, so how do we interpret the Bible accurately so we can truly imitate God in our lives and daily choices? This is normally a topic which would take around 50 hours to study – I'm going to give you a taste of it in 10 minutes! I'm going to give you some very simple and short principles to help you navigate this topic which is somewhat of a minefield. Firstly we need to understand something about ourselves.

**My pair of glasses.** These help me see more clearly...I look through them...they bring clarity. *But in reality, we all wear glasses!* When it comes to interpreting the Bible we all look through our own pair of 'life' lenses. Our lenses are comprised of our *knowledge, and our experiences*, and these shape our thinking and beliefs. However and here's the challenging part - overriding these should be how we view the Bible as our manual (the Maker's instructions!) for living.

Firstly some important words and some for you to think about: ***Hermeneutics and Homiletics - The two H words!*** This is the way we understand what the Bible says and homiletics is the way we communicate it. *Exegesis* – means to tease out the meaning of the words. My story about Samson and long hair is bad exegesis because the Bible does not say that. If you read the parable of the sower and seeds in the Bible and decide we should buy farmland and plant crops – that's not great exegesis either!

**Principle 1. What is the type of material I am looking at?** – is it poetry, history, prophecy, parable, or eschatology? The material is a *clue* to how you understand the content.

A parable is a story with one core meaning or spiritual truth.

Poetry is a genre type that expresses thinking and emotion.

Eschatology (last times) uses graphic symbolism to tell a story.

History is an accurate record of facts or truths to address a particular issue.

Prophecy is both foretelling and forth telling of truth often with a later outcome.

Understanding the style of material will keep you on track to interpret the content.

Once you understand the type of material you are looking at it will help you interpret the message of it more accurately.

**Principle 2. What is the context of the verse(s)** and how does this impinge upon the message? – E.g. Ephesians, 1 Peter, Luke, Isaiah. The original context is a *helpful clue* but not always the final decider of the verse(s). The reason for this is that the Bible has a revelatory component to it which I will speak about shortly, this means it has a message for the receivers when first written but more importantly an eternal Spirit-inspired message for all time and for all readers.

**Principle 3 What about Revelation and Rhema?** – Just when you think you've got it nailed along comes this one. All scripture is inspired by God the Bible says. But this verse assumes that we will interpret the Bible verses correctly and that we will shelve something we cannot fully understand but not reduce our commitment to the Bible's authority. Now I've given you some principles above but revelation and Rhema come to us from the left field, outside of this where the Holy Spirit takes something we read and enlivens it to us. (Psalm 32.8, Luke 5) That's a Rhema word and it's real and alive. It's like the prophets of the Old Testament when they said the words '*And the Word of the Lord came to me*'.... We must allow the Bible to be dynamic and Spirit-led while not falling into error by insisting that others see everything the way we do. Is the Bible then the final revelation of God? No, Jesus is that but the Bible is the *record of Jesus and contains everything we need*. So in a sense yes there is no more Bible to be written, no more revelation to be given **except – insight into what is already given**. Don't confuse a Rhema word to you from God with scripture. Generally, Rhema words are for your direction and pathway choice and they will align with Bible teaching. E.g. Divorce your wife. And by the way – *don't elevate Rhema words over the teaching of scripture itself!*

**Principle 4 – Allow the Bible to interpret itself.** Allow the teaching from verses to build a complete theology from various books and places. The more theology or teaching is honed and strengthened by other parts of the Bible the more significant the teaching is. Eg. The Love and passion of God. The lostness of man. I don't know what to call this other than the 'Big story of God'. If you view the whole Bible as the story of God then you can see the threads of this great story and understand what each of the books and even verses contribute to this. Having a big story theology will keep you on track from going down rabbit holes (like eschatology for example). So each of the books of the Bible makes a contribution to the larger story of God.

## **The underlying issue is a correct understanding of Inspiration**

Would you rate the Sermon on the Mount by Jesus as having the same authority as say the Book of Ruth which does not mention the word God once! What about some of Paul's teaching on women in ministry or slavery? – does that hold the same level of authority as his teaching in the book of Romans? What about the value of the book of Leviticus as opposed to one of the gospels? This is a hard question and needs careful thinking. If I say no to this then I am putting some verses of the Bible above others. For me, I would put the NT over the Old Testament because of what we call progressive revelation but there is a rider to this which I will mention now. But I think we need to hold the view that every part of the Bible is inspired and there for a purpose. We need every part of it for complete revelation.

**If someone tells you they have had a word from God** – ask these questions: Does this align with the *general* teachings of the Bible? Does it lead this person closer to Christ and his mission in their lives? Who is the message for? Clarify with them if the message is for them personally or someone else. Then if it does pray with them that God uses that message to direct them. OK, I think that's enough for now. But let me finish this by reminding you about your pair of glasses. We all have them. Every now and then it's good to take them off and 'polish them'. Am I seeing correctly? Is this conviction I'm holding truth from scripture or possibly a misbelief that I need to upgrade for truth?

## **2. Illumination**

Now Paul writes about us to be separate from people who walk in darkness, even some who profess to be believers and justify their behaviour by poor Bible interpretation and misbelief. **Judging other people's Behaviour** – I have spent some weeks reminding you to be grace distributors and not to judge others but to approach people with mercy. Last week I spoke about speaking the truth in love. *In order to discern truth, we need to also discern error.* How can we do this without judging?

Here in this chapter, we are told not to associate with people who are clearly compromising their faith? Here is what I suggest on this: *judge your own life and your own behaviour and let God judge other people's lives and behaviours!* As soon as you judge others you immediately become judged yourself and put yourself in a place where you cannot be a grace distributor to them. Does it mean we condone what other people do and say? No.... but don't get caught up in their misguided activities. We do this by correctly interpreting the Bible and the second principle in this chapter of Illumination.

Principle of Illumination – means to see where you're going. I walked through a ranch slider when I was 23 years old.... Then just a few months ago I stumbled in the dark when sleepwalking to the bathroom without waking up first and damaged my wrist. Yes, you can injure yourself badly when you don't have enough light and a clear pathway ahead! Paul teaches here that you are now light! - not seen the light but *you are the light* – making the world a place of light rather than darkness.

Darkness is both unfruitful and unmentionable. So when you walk as children of the light your lives **become fruitful**. There is a *purpose* to what you do. You know the one thing people all around us are struggling with – is a lack of purpose. Counsellors will tell you that is the number 1 cause of depression and suicide is lack of purpose. Live then like people of

the light.....with nothing to hide, no shame. The first thing we do when we fail or mess up is to try to minimise the damage, we try to cover it up, hide it, bury it...we don't want to be reminded of it. So what does light do about darkness...well it's quite simple. Think about what happens when a light is turned on in a dark room. Where does the darkness go? I don't know but it is *overcome* by the light!!! We are not to run around condemning people who walk in darkness. We are just to turn on the light of God and let the truth about Jesus shine!

And we do that best when we are intoxicated with the Spirit!

### **3. Intoxication**

Make the most of the days in which you live v16, Understand what the will of God is v17, and being filled with the Spirit v18, which has an outcome of singing and making *music in your heart!* (That's for the non-singers!). And give thanks for everything to God the Father and Jesus Christ v20. There is no other way to live this Christian life than to be spirit filled. There is *more than one filling* and more than one baptism (immersion in Spirit).

There is always some outcome to being filled with the Spirit – you cannot contain the Spirit and not show it in some way. But the usual ways in worship and being thankful for whatever comes your way. Actually to be filled or baptised in the Spirit means to be controlled by or to put it even more accurately *overcome* by the Spirit. In the same way that you are overcome by alcohol.

#### **Is your life difficult? – be thankful**

Are you experiencing some storms at the moment – be thankful. Why? Because you have the Spirit in you, and the Father is watching you and the Son is 'Lording' that moment for your welfare and learning. I know this is hard to do and easy to say. But the alternative is worse which is that we are left to a random existence without purpose or plan with no life support. I know which I would rather have. I saw this recently in practice with my brother in law who today is lying in the lounge on his bed – he has already outlived the medical predictions and he says – well I just give thanks for the life I've had and the opportunities right now I have to speak to people. Another one the pastor that led me to Christ is right now sent home from hospital with leukaemia and he says, well I'm just taking it day by day – each day something happens where I get to talk or pray with people – I am thankful for the 80+ years I've lived. Once you get into the habit of being thankful for daily blessings you will then learn how to be thankful even for hardship and suffering. Why? Because it is then the shining of God's Spirit is seen the brightest!

Imitation, Illumination and Intoxication...and Interpretation  
It's all for you!