

The School of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 4:20-6:9), Practical Lessons for Christian Living

In Ephesians 4:20, NKJV, we read: "But you have not so learned Christ". Then, the Apostle Paul takes us to the School of Jesus Christ in his subsequent discourse. Remember, there are no chapter divisions in the original letter.

1. The Curriculum
 - a. 4:20-24, Orientation, Room 101
 - b. 4:25-32, General Studies, Room 102
 - c. 5:1-7, Walk in Love, Room 201
 - d. 5:8-14, Walk in Light, Room 202
 - e. 5:15-21, Walk in Wisdom, Room 203
 - f. 5:22-33, Marriage, Room 301
 - g. 6:1-4, Children and Parents, Room 302
 - h. 6:5-9, Bondservants and Masters, Room 303
2. 4:20-24, Orientation, Room 101
 - a. Entrance Requirements for the School of Jesus Christ
 - i. Renewed heart, Romans 10:10
 - ii. Renewed mind, Ephesians 4:23, Cf. Romans 12:2
 - iii. Salvation, Sanctification, Cf. 1 Peter 1:3-5, 13-16
 - b. School Motto
 - i. Ephesians 4:24, "True Righteousness and Holiness"
 - c. General conduct prescribed, but particular lessons enjoined
 - i. Goals and life applications must be specific
 1. For prayer
 2. For measurability of spiritual progress
3. 4:25-32, General Studies, Room 102
 - a. Verse 25, Truthfulness, Cf. Zechariah 8:16
 - i. Outworking of Leviticus 19:18, love of neighbor, logically placed here as the second major step following orientation, vertical to horizontal
 - ii. The basis, Christian unity, Ephesians 4:1-6
 - iii. The concept, truth promotes peace and unity
 - b. Verse 26-27, Anger, Cf. Psalm 4:4
 - i. "Be angry", place for righteous anger, as in John 2:13-17, its relative rarity, and self deception in this regard
 - ii. "and do not sin", no place for unrighteous anger, or righteous anger taken too far, retaliation forbidden, Romans 12:19-21
 - iii. Warning against holding onto anger and holding grudges, settling accounts godly ways
 - iv. "place to the devil", general principle, here applied specifically
 1. Can be done actively or passively, define/discuss

2. 1 Peter 5:8, the devil is working
 3. Conscious allowance by coddling sin, Cf. Isaiah 59:5
- c. Verse 28, Stealing
 - i. Cf. Exodus 20:15, 8th Commandment
 - ii. Taking something that God has not given you
 - iii. Can be blatant, or subtle, as in filing false tax returns, or stealing time or small items from an employer
 - d. Verse 28, Working
 - i. Created to work, Genesis 2:15
 - ii. Productivity in society “is good”, 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12
 - iii. Entitlement mentality is the opposite of work
 - iv. 1 Timothy 5:8, providing for self and family
 - v. 2 Thessalonians 3:10, laziness as sin
 - vi. “to give”, generosity and charity enjoined, Acts 20:34-35 as example and divine command
 - e. Verse 29, Speech
 - i. Corrupt, unnecessary and not leading to “edification”
 - ii. Positive Speech, Colossians 4:6
 - iii. Power and Danger of the Tongue, James 3:1-12
 - f. Verse 30, “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit”
 - i. Holy Spirit is God, and is a Person, proof text
 - ii. Interjection here, negative things in the verses prior and following grieve Him
 - iii. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, as further exhortation
 - iv. Ready help at hand, God who seals also helps, “Helper” (John 16:7)
 - g. Verse 31, the Anger Family, all related
 - i. Evil speaking and evil actions done from evil motives
 - ii. Matthew 12:33-37, such things are fruits of the flesh, Cf. Ephesians 4:22
 - h. Verse 32, Kindness
 - i. Necessary and intentional
 - ii. Find ways to exhibit it, examples re: speech and action
 - i. Verse 32, Tenderheartedness
 - i. Not calloused by past experiences
 - ii. Willingness to give people a chance because God gave you a chance
 - j. Verse 32, Forgiveness
 - i. Its basis and its example, Jesus Christ, the Headmaster of the School, purpose of the school is to become more like its Headmaster
 - ii. Danger of withholding, Matthew 6:14-15, and Galatians 6:7 strife and bitterness resulting, burden of the offense lies upon the offended, Cf. Genesis 50:19-21

4. 5:1-7, Walk in Love, Room 201

a. Verse 1

- i. "Therefore", connects it to prior passage (4:25-32), more specifically to prior verse (4:32), the bar for Christians is set exceedingly high
- ii. "be imitators of God", in perfect truth, righteous anger, giving spirit, graceful words, without malicious intent or behavior
 1. God is "for you", despite your shortcomings (Romans 8:31-32)
 2. His exceeding kindness, tender heart, forgiveness; It has been well said that Christ died of a broken heart (1 John 5:6).
- iii. "as dear children", 1 John 3:1-3
- iv. Remember the school motto, "True Righteousness and Holiness" (Ephesians 4:24), purity and abstinence from sin, Righteousness and Holiness are perfect attributes of God, imitation is for believers with regard to the present continuing work of sanctification, meaning set apart, for a particular purpose
 1. Sanctification, the doctrine (Although a more orthodox theological understanding is justification, sanctification, glorification, in what sense might sanctification be said to be a past, present, and future work?)
 - a. Positional, 1 Corinthians 6:11, used in the past tense, related to justification, Hebrews 6:9, its means, the finished work of Christ, Hebrews 10:10, one becomes positionally sanctified at point of salvation, not at some other time, this is the only sense in which sanctification can be said to be instant
 - b. Permanent, a theological construct related to glorification and the perseverance of the saints (see our position paper, "Eternal Security, 21 Proofs"), 2 Thessalonians 2:13 taken with Ephesians 1:13, fore-ordained particular specific work of God the Holy Spirit in an individual, resulting in His irresistible grace, with results that continue forever
 - c. Progressive, used in the present tense for holy living, as in Hebrews 2:11, a work of God in us, usual means is the Word of God, John 17:17, general usage in Scripture
 2. Sanctification, present work and the role of prayer
 - a. Luke 9:23, daily discipleship, no day excluded
 - b. Philippians 3:12-16, never at a point of completion in our lives
 - c. Ephesians 5:18, Greek present passive imperative, "Keep on being filled with the Spirit", allowing God to work in you
 - d. John 14:15-18, divine Helper required, we are not without one
 - e. 1 John 1:8-9, with a realistic admission of our need and capacity to sin, How far we fall short of being "imitators of God"!
 - f. Do you "under-pray" for personal holiness? Apply Josh 7:10-26.

- b. Ephesians 5:2
 - i. Joined to verse 1, to “walk in love” is to imitate God and His Son
 - 1. God’s expression of love, John 3:16
 - 2. The outworking of love in our lives, 1 John 3:16
 - ii. Love involves sacrifice
 - 1. Of one’s own agendas and desires
 - 2. Of one’s personal comfort
 - 3. In one’s daily walk, sanctification, Luke 9:23
 - 4. Sacrificial love versus enabling, Proverbs 19:19
- c. 5:3-4, Six things that are not fitting for the saints—those who are set apart, or being sanctified (Hebrews 2:11, 10:14), God’s present work in the lives of believers, and our response and behavior
 - i. “fornication”, sexually immoral behavior
 - 1. Adultery, extramarital sex
 - 2. Sex outside of biblically defined marriage, Genesis 2:24, including premarital sex, Exodus 22:16 applied
 - 3. Pornography, Debauchery (Indulgence of appetite, social settings)
 - ii. “all uncleanness”
 - 1. Worldly engagements that do not glorify God
 - 2. Unclean person would be outside the camp, as in Leviticus 13:46, NT application, outside of the place of communion with God
 - iii. “covetousness”, Tenth Commandment, Exodus 20:17
 - 1. Wanting that which God has not given you
 - 2. Manifestations
 - a. In the mind, way of thinking, thanklessness
 - b. Actions, seeking gain by ungodly means
 - iv. “filthiness”
 - 1. Greek: “aischrotes”, “shameless talk and/or conduct”
 - 2. No regard for impact of talk and behavior on testimony
 - 3. Apply: our testimony honors or dishonors God, and leads others towards or away from Him
 - 4. Apply: sin causes shame, as in Genesis 3:10, if God the Holy Spirit is operative in the life of the believer, 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22 applied
 - v. “foolish talking”
 - 1. Bragging
 - 2. Telling tales out of school, breaking confidences, rumors, gossip
 - 3. Speaking while uninformed
 - 4. Psalm 141:3; Proverbs 13:3, 21:23; James 1:26
 - vi. “coarse jesting”
 - 1. Innuendos (sexual or intended to insult or tear down)
 - 2. Profane language, lots of other words in the dictionary

- d. Ephesians 5:5-6
 - i. Those whose lives are characterized by the things in verse 5 are not truly saved, but professing believers only who are under the 'Christian Umbrella'
 - ii. Christian profession without any life change proven to be false profession over time, sometimes from the first, sometimes soon after, take the fruit test
 - iii. "empty words", which do not prosper the soul, many deceived by the false prosperity gospel, doing what's easy, or other 'spiritual paths' different from the true gospel, presented in a balanced way (repentance and sin included)
 - iv. Antinomianism, a theological term
 - 1. It's meaning, from the Greek and Latin, meaning lawless, more specifically, against moral law requirements, or without moral law, may be defined as that which is in direct violation of FOBO, NT ordinances
 - 2. Antinomianism is "cheap grace", salvation without accountability to God who paid such a great price for sin (Christ's blood)
 - 3. Romans 6:1-7; Galatians 5:13, biblical usage
 - 4. Opposite of legalism, Cf. Galatians 2:4, it is an allowance of sin
 - 5. Charges leveled within Christianity
 - a. Implied by these charges is that the doctrine leads to antinomianism, or a license to sin
 - b. Founded, liberal denominations (rejection of biblical truth, authority, and divinely revealed standards), seeker sensitive evangelicalism (preference to please men more than God, an unwillingness to preach repentance and sin), open theology (insofar as there is a subjective view of biblical revelation)
 - c. Unfounded, Catholics towards Protestants (grace alone apart from church law), Arminians towards Calvinists (with regard to election), Amish towards Mennonites (with regard to looser standards on dress, patterns in clothing, beards on men), Various non-essential issues (e.g. local church membership roll, types of permissible musical instruments, dress requirements, etc...), these charges explained and refuted.
- e. 5:7
 - i. Biblical separation, from the worldly crowd, 1 Corinthians 15:33
 - ii. Participation in God's grace, and those things which glorify Him, the new mindset of the redeemed
 - iii. Participation in worldly preoccupations forbidden, by command, "Do not"
 - 1. As e.g.'s, events characterized by gambling, excessive drinking, sexual innuendo, etc... to be avoided by Christians

5. 5:8-14, Walk in Light, Room 202
 - a. 5:8
 - i. What believers were, “darkness”, Cf. Ephesians 2:1
 - ii. What believers are now, “light”, because of our position in Christ
 - iii. Matthew 5:14-16, again, present position, our choice if we shine
 - b. 5:9, The Threefold Test, Three Christian Graces
 - i. Cf. Galatians 5:22-23, where fruit is also singular
 - ii. Is it good? Is it righteous? Is it true? Being imitators of God in these things
 1. Psalm 33:4-5 speaks of all 3 divine attributes
 - iii. Herbert Taylor’s four way test derived from this text, at least in part
 - iv. Threefold adjectives divinely defined, “fruit of the Spirit”, NU, “light”, for the Christians this must be biblically defined, not humanistically defined, truth is exclusive to God
 - v. “goodness”, Luke 6:35; Romans 13:3; 1 Peter 3:11
 - vi. “righteousness”, Psalm 119:137; 1 Corinthians 15:34; Philippians 1:11
 - vii. “truth”, John 1:14, 14:6, 17:17; Ephesians 4:25, truth is objective,
 - c. 5:10, The Threefold Practice of Christian Graces
 - i. Practice of these three Christian graces in the Christian life takes discernment and work, John 16:13-15; 2 Timothy 2:15, 3:16, guidance of the indwelling Spirit, example of Christ as the standard to imitate, perfect consistency with the revealed Word of God as the objective standard
 - d. 5:11, Biblical Separation Enjoined
 - i. “have no fellowship”, non-participation, non-association
 - ii. “unfruitful works of darkness”, their origin, and their effect
 - iii. “expose them”, to the light, Cf. 5:8, when judging in accordance to biblical principles, Cf. John 7:24, duty to judge and discern spiritually
 - iv. Discuss: Examples of when Christians must separate from a thing (e.g. same-sex ceremonies), or only aspects of a thing (e.g. holidays)
 - e. 5:12, Secret sins
 - i. Not to give them the ‘time of day’, Cf. 5:4, an application of “foolish talking”
 - f. 5:13, Exposure of sin, by shining the light of God’s truth on a matter
 - i. “all things...made manifest”, truth obvious, despite ‘political correctness’
 - g. 5:14, The benedictory charge of the passage (5:8-14)
 - i. “Awake”, from spiritual slumber (Is. 50:4, 56:10; Rom 13:11; 1 Cor. 15:34)
 - ii. “Arise”, from imitating the spiritually dead (Eph 2:1-10), and work!
 1. Ecclesiastes 9:10; John 9:4 imitated (Ephesians 5:1 applied)
 - iii. “And Christ will give you light”, the promise for those who wake up from spiritual slumber and live for Jesus (John 12:35; 2 Cor. 4:6)

6. 5:15-21, Walk in Wisdom, Room 203
 - a. Verse 15, “circumspectly”, www.vocabulary.com notes that this “implies a careful consideration of all circumstances and a desire to avoid mistakes and bad consequences.”
 - i. In context, to behave in such a way as to avoid doing that which brings dishonor to God.
 - ii. “not as fools but as wise”, with regard to right application of divine knowledge
 - b. Verse 16, “redeeming the time”, or cashing it in for something of eternal value
 - i. Stewardship of time, as Christian duty
 - ii. Consider amounts of time spent in pursuits such as television, internet, surfing and social media in particular
 - iii. Psalm 90:12, Cf. John 9:4, time is limited
 - iv. Ecclesiastes 12:1, Cf. 1 Corinthians 3:11-15, regrets of a life with much time wasted, especially applied to believers
 - c. “because the days are evil”
 - i. Always applicable, Genesis 6:5, sin nature the root of evil days, true in Noah’s day, Paul’s day, and our day
 - d. Verse 17, the divine advice, how to follow it
 - i. Cf. Proverbs 1:1-7, 3:5-6, objective truth, teachable heart, divine guidance
 - e. Verse 18, “do not be drunk with wine”
 - i. Drunkenness forbidden, not wine itself, Psalm 104:15; John 2:1-10
 - ii. If one loses self control, complete abstinence required (1 Corinthians 6:12; Galatians 5:23)
 - iii. Worldly excess/addictions in general as opposed to spiritual mindedness
 - f. “but be filled with the Spirit”
 - i. Greek implies present, passive, and continuous action, see section 4, point 2 of this outline
 - ii. Sanctification as present work is continuous action in the life of the believer
 - iii. Requires meekness, or yieldedness to God’s work, action is passive, with results that flow out of the Spirit’s inward work, Matthew 5:5-6
 - g. Verse 19,
 - i. “speaking”, spiritual talk, Luke 24:32, its profit for edification
 - ii. “psalms”, Scripture, Cf. Hebrews 4:12
 - iii. “hymns”, songs which direct us to worship, scriptural and doctrinal content
 - iv. “spiritual songs”, songs which glorify Jesus Christ the Savior and exhort to holy living, more general term than the previous
 - v. “melody in your heart”, inward attitude of worship which results
 - h. Verse 20-21, Cf. Mark 12:29-31, outworking of the two greatest commandments
 - i. Thanksgiving, Philippians 4:6-7, vertical relationship
 - ii. Mutual submission, horizontal relationships, characterized by selflessness

7. 5:22-33, Marriage, Room 301
 - a. Verses 22 and 24, Duties of Wives
 - i. Submission to God, and as part of this, God's order and design in marriage
 - ii. Submission to her husband, not seeking to usurp his role
 - iii. Apply: cultural definitions of "equality of the sexes"
 - iv. Note, "wives" have "husbands", precludes other unions
 - v. 1 Peter 3:1-6
 - b. Verse 23 and 25, Duties of Husbands
 - i. Exercise headship within the marriage (1 Corinthians 11:3 applied)
 - ii. The basis, divine order, the similitude, Christ and His bride (the church)
 - iii. Applied in marriage relations, and church polity and practice (1 Timothy 2:12-3:2)
 - iv. The standard, perfect sacrificial agape love
 - v. 1 Timothy 5:8, applied to physical and spiritual care of the wife
 - vi. 1 Peter 3:1-7
 - c. Verses 26-27, The extent of Christ's love for his bride, the church
 - i. "sanctify", set apart, 1 Peter 2:4-5
 - ii. Spiritual cleansing, "by the word", Scripture an agent of cleansing
 - iii. Spiritual beauty desired, applied to marriage, many compliments and exceedingly high value placed upon one's spouse
 - d. Verse 28-31, Respect and Selflessness
 - i. Verse 28, one flesh concept, Genesis 2:24 quoted in Verse 31
 - ii. Nourishment in the marriage, trust, communication, romance (Song of Solomon), as e.g.'s...
 - iii. Cherishing of spouse, imitating Christ's cherishing His church
 - iv. Verse 30, inseparability, spiritual reality applied to our marriages
 - e. Verse 32-33
 - i. Sanctity and uniqueness of the spiritual bond, and its imitation and application to the marital bond
 - ii. Summary: Gentlemen, sacrificial and selfless love, Ladies, willingness to accept husband's role and responsibility as leader (and ultimately, final decision maker) and respect privately and publicly
 1. When marriages break down, one or both is missing, and the biblical design for marriage cannot be attained without Christ (Eccl. 4:12)
 2. Movement to be 100% in spouse's direction for both parties, 50/50 and egalitarianism as recipe for disaster
 3. Compromise necessary, final decision making and responsibility rests with the husband

8. 6:1-4, Children and Parents, Room 302
 - a. Verse 1, duty of children to obey parents, reasoning behind this
 - i. Parents have been given the stewardship over the children
 1. Divine order, principle continued from prior passage (5:22-33)
 2. “for this is right”, God declares obedience proper action
 - a. Does not say ‘for they are right’
 - b. No qualifiers
 - c. Domestic duty extends into adulthood, albeit in a different capacity
 - b. Verses 2-3, quotes Deuteronomy 5:16
 - i. First commandment in sequence with a (positive promise)
 - ii. Context, civil law, Deuteronomy 21:18-21
 - iii. Apply: those who refuse to heed the wisdom of parents go their way, and often pay consequences, sometimes resulting in premature death (e.g. addictions, crime, disease, poor health, etc...)
 - c. Verse 4, duties of parents, “fathers” in particular
 - i. Arguably the most concise verse on fatherhood in the Bible
 - ii. Fathers responsible for discipline in the home, and held to greater responsibility as head of the household, again, outworking of divine order in prior passage
 - iii. “do not provoke”, excessive and harsh discipline prohibited, emotional and mental abuse likewise prohibited
 - iv. “wrath”, the result of the provocation, anger, malice, which often extends into adult life, until/unless Christ intervenes
 - v. “bring them up”, not neglecting their children
 - vi. “training”, teaching, in accord with Bible precepts, “of the Lord”
 - vii. “admonition of the Lord”, warning of deviation from the Lord’s pathway
9. 6:5-9, Bondservants and Masters, Room 303
 - a. Verse 5
 - i. “Bondservants”, slaves, the institution being neither approved or condemned, but regulations given to temper its abuse, for godly people
 - ii. “masters” is “kurios” in Greek, “according to the flesh” exercising lordship in earthly matters, but Jesus is “Kurios” in all matters ‘according to the spirit’ is implied
 - iii. “fear and trembling”, respect for authority enjoined
 - iv. “in sincerity of heart”, without pretense, but honestly, Cf. 2 Corinthians 1:12
 - v. “as to Christ”, comparable to the singleness of heart the Christian is called to have for Christ, Cf. Luke 16:13
 - b. Verse 6
 - i. Not after worldly fashions, but in Christian fashion, the higher bar of conduct, ethics, and integrity

- ii. In giving good testimony we serve Christ
 - iii. “from the heart”, sincerity of heart reiterated
 - c. 6:7
 - i. “with goodwill”, working with this attitude towards masters/employers
 - ii. “Service, as to the Lord”, as if Jesus Himself commanded you
 - iii. “not to men”, that is, with understanding that all we do is for the Lord,
 - 1. 1 Corinthians 10:31-33, applied
 - d. 6:8
 - i. Divine rewards for earthly service and conduct—although not direct service, the service does reflect direct obedience
 - ii. “whether he is slave or free”, regardless of earthly circumstance, we all are accountable to the same God
 - e. 6:9
 - i. “masters”, employers
 - ii. “do the same things”, that is, operate under the same Christian principles
 - iii. “giving up threatening”, not being a tyrant
 - iv. The reason, earthly “masters” likewise have a “Master” in heaven, who judges rightly and fairly towards all, regardless of earthly station
 - f. Summary, 6:5-9
 - i. Applications today are towards employee and employer
 - 1. Employees are to be exemplary in work habits (discuss)
 - 2. Employers are to be Christ-like in exercising authority (discuss)
 - 3. Christian testimony and souls are at stake
10. Broader summary of this study (Ephesians 4:20-6:9): serving God in all roles in life enjoined, you may be a husband, father, son, employer, employee, church worker, etc... but in all these roles, walk in love, wisdom, light, truth, and integrity, in imitation of the Master.
- a. You have completed the classes, on all three floors. But you will not graduate until Christ graduates you to heaven. The earth is your classroom. Let us each go out and live what we have learned, backing up our Christian talk with a genuine Christian walk.