

Mystery & Clarity//Ephesians 5:1–17//“Sex, Idols and Darkness: The Mystery of the New Life, pt 2”

Prayer

Our Believe Project is a special offering we took up to help us expand our ministries here in the Triangle, and we had a special offering for it a couple of weeks ago... and I'm pleased to report to you that with that offering we have collected, thus far this year, \$885,000... Our goal is \$1 million, so, if you haven't contributed yet or jumped on board with this project, make sure that you grab an envelope or give online. (We have 115K left... if you are here...) And come back next week excited to celebrate what God has done as we close out this part of the project. Guys, we are very committed to seeing the Great Commission go forward, both in our own city and around the world, and we sacrifice to make that happen.

What, if anything, makes Christianity different from other religions?

Our culture believes all religions are essentially the same... different brands, same product. *Is that true?*

Last week I showed you that in chapters 4 and 5 of the letter to the Ephesians Paul talks through a list of Christian behaviors... and, candidly speaking, on the surface there's nothing particularly remarkable about the list—it's got things like honesty, hard work, kindness, loving your family, generosity—well, all religions teach those... right? Not particularly remarkable.

But what I showed you is **remarkable** is why a Christian does those things. Paul shows you that the Gospel makes us the kind of people who **want** to do those things...

- Woody Allen once said, “The heart wants what it wants...” and, believe it or not, the Gospel agrees with that... the heart does want what it wants, and so if you force the heart to do what it doesn't want to do, it's going to feel like it's in captivity. That's religion, and that's why religion often feels like drudgery to people. Forcing you to do stuff you don't really want to do, and threatening you will eternal damnation or bad karma or whatever if you don't.
- The way Gospel changes us, **by contrast**, Paul says, is to change our *heart* so that it begins to want what God wants.
- So, for the 1st 3 chapters in Ephesians Paul gives you one of the deepest explanations of the Gospel recorded in the Bible before he gives you the 1st one of these moral prescriptions.
- 3 chapters of doctrine, and then the moral instruction, joined by a single word: THEREFORE! The behaviors flow out of the Gospel's work in our heart. The Gospel changes us internally, and then our behavior changes *naturally*.

The opposite of that is a word I taught you last week: **moralism**: **emphasizing external obedience more than internal disposition** (I told you that many of us grew up in churches that were just like this. They emphasized external conformity to some standards: we were told: do this, do that... around here we call those “do-do churches.”

- I compared it last week to stapling roses on a dead bush—if I had a dead bush in my yard and I want to make it alive...
- Or, remember that old movie, *Weekend at Bernie's*? Take the dead guy and make him look alive? That's what other religions are doing...
- Seriously... How many?

Gospel change is exactly the opposite of moralism. Your behavior changes because you change. You are made alive and so you act alive.

- The fruit tree doesn't need to be commanded to bear fruit, it does so naturally;
- Living people don't need to be commanded to breathe, they just do it, right?

SO HOW DOES THE GOSPEL bring that kind of change? It reveals to you the beauty of God and gives you an appetite for it so that you begin to desire God more than you do sin.

You see, **the Gospel, unlike other religions, is not primarily a prescription of what you are to do.** The Gospel is a story that reveals the beauty of God to you by telling you of God's great love for you that He showed for you when He purchased your salvation

- You see, every religion in the world tells you to "obey, and you will be accepted." So you obey to be accepted. But the Gospel declares, "You are accepted, not because of anything you have done, but because of what Christ has done... in response to that, go and obey!"
- We call that "gift righteousness." One of the most important elements of Christianity: God's righteousness given to you as a gift, not as a reward for what you've earned. *In response to that, to seeing the beauty and power and grace of God freely given to you, you change.* You begin to love God and what is good and right.

We're going to continue this discussion here in chapter 5. Paul is going to give you some more things that Christians ought to do, ways they should behave, and intermixed in there are **6 reasons Christians act righteously.**

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

(1) As beloved children of God, we imitate our daddy (v. 1)

- Imitate means we act like Him; we respond how He would respond to situations.

- But, notice: We don't imitate God to become His children, *but because we are His children.*
 - You see, most religions teach you that if you imitate God you will become His child.
 - The Gospel says, "Imitate God because you are His child!"
- And this makes all the difference... Here's why...when a religion tells you to imitate someone—be like Mohammad; be like Buddha; be like Jesus or the pope or the saints—when it does that, but doesn't give you the heart to desire what they desire, imitation becomes wearisome!
 - Ever get around someone you admire and want to imitate but you just don't seem to be made up the way they are? **Recently I was around a guy who was just so good with people...** whoever he was talking to was always the most important... obvious he loved people and you wanted to be around Him. So, I was like, "I want to be like that." And I did it... tried to act like him... tried to be enthusiastic about every person I met... make them feel special... but after while I realized... "I just don't like people as much he does." **More than I need to imitate his behavior, I need his heart!**
 - More than we need to try and act like God, we need to love, in the depths of our hearts, what God loves.
 - I asked you this last week: **Why does God "do righteousness?"** Is it because he feels like He'll be rewarded if He does? Because He'll look bad in the eyes of all the other gods and lose respect if He doesn't? Or, is it because He's afraid He'll throw Himself into hell if He doesn't? No. **God does righteousness because He loves righteousness.** He does good because He is good. And that's why it never gets tiring to Him.

- **So, where and how do we learn to love righteousness like that?** God produces that in us as He makes us His child. He puts His Spirit in us, gives us His desires... He helps us see who He is and what He did for us so that we are so overwhelmed with what our Daddy did to rescue us that we start naturally to love what He loves and we want, naturally, to imitate Him.
- So, it's not that we imitate Him to become His child, we imitate Him because we have become His child and we love Him!
 - See, don't get the cart before the horse... it's not that **imitation brings salvation; salvation produces a desire for imitation.**
- **As beloved children of God** (*not, in order to be children of God, but because you are children of God*), **imitate Him!** In every situation ask... *how does God feel about this? How's He feel about this show? This joke? This relationship? This attitude? This activity? Does God enjoy this?*

Reason #2: ² *And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

(2) We live lives of love and sacrifice for others because that's what Jesus did for us (v. 2)

- A response... you get overwhelmed with the love that Jesus showed to you. When you study the Gospels, you see how love burst through every part of His life...
 - You see it when the woman caught in adultery is brought to him... rather than join in her humiliation and condemnation, he spoke to her like she was his daughter... words of compassion and forgiveness. *Where are those that accuse you? Why? Because he loved her.*
 - You see it when He weeps with Mary and Martha over Lazarus' death... shows us he feels our deepest pain.
 - You see it when he weeps for us when He enters into the horror and hell in the Garden of Gethsemane and when

- His body was ripped open by Roman whips and pierced by Roman nails and hung naked in the sun to die at Calvary.
- What explodes off of every page of the Gospel is tender love...¹
- We respond to that...
 - ***This is really big around here...*** If you have been changed by Jesus you show it by forgiving others; serving others; by loving our community, meeting their needs, and using our time and resources to bring Jesus to them.
 - If you don't live that way, that proves you've never really experienced God's love. *"A life poured out in deeds of mercy is the inevitable sign of a life which has experienced the grace of God."* Tim Keller
- **It's a response... one more thing... great image...** living this way is a sweet fragrance to God...
 - **Ruined by B.O.**
 - Bad breath
 - Contrast with sweet fragrance...

³ *But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.*

- Let's talk about the word proper... Proper here means don't go along, or doesn't fit... Sexual immorality and covetousness do not fit with the character of God! **Reason #3 Christians do righteousness = (3) We do righteousness because living impurely 'does not fit' with those who love and are loved by a holy God (v. 3).**
- **Let's look at these 2 things mentioned in those verses... sexual immorality and covetousness, and ask, "Why don't they fit?"**
 - **Sexual immorality:** Sex is not supposed to be selfish and self-serving... where you do it just because it meets a need in your life. It is supposed to be a oneness of your bodies that is accompanied by oneness in every other area. **Don't**

¹ Old hymn: *"The love of God, is greater far, than tongue or pen, can ever tell; it goes beyond the highest star, and reaches to, the lowest hell..."*

mean to be graphic, but you are very vulnerable, your bodies interlock... ONE PERSON physically. That is to be matched by oneness in every other area: emotional, spiritual, financial... you become a complete part of that other person for life.

- When you have sex outside of marriage, you are taking physical oneness from them without giving them the rest of yourself. It's unbelievably selfish. Your body is telling them one thing... "I'm yours," but that's not true... because you are not really joining the rest of you to them.
 - But you're like, "Oh, but I do love them..." well then, marry them. Become completely one. You and I know that when you're having sex and you're not married you could walk away at any point.
 - Sex is powerful, a gift of God... in the right context it is a wonderful, love blessing, but out of that context, it is selfish and destructive. **Analogy: Do you want fire in your house?**
- So, Paul says, "immorality should not even be named among you." **Selfish sex does not fit with a holy, loving, sacrificial, give-myself-completely-to-others God.** So, Paul says, immorality should not be practiced, fantasized about, longed for or even named among you.
- Or I love how the NIV translates that verse, "there should not even be a hint of immorality..." What does that mean?
 - **"Not even a hint" means that we don't flirt with it...** The question I get from Christian teenagers and college students is always, "How far is too far?" Draw the baseball diamond... where do we go foul?
 - That very question, for some people, betrays that they don't get the point. You're trying to see how close you can get to impurity without falling into it! The point is to be as pure as possible.
 - I understand that if you are in a relationship headed toward marriage the occasional show of affection is inappropriate; But there's a

difference... and you know what I'm talking about. I'm saying you shouldn't be lighting a rocket you don't intend to launch, or writing checks with your lips that you don't intend to cash with your body. If you want more, go back and listen to our Song of Solomon series.

- **"Not even a hint" means that we don't fill our minds with it and call it entertainment**
 - **Thought a lot this week about my own viewing habits...** Many of us need really to think about what we watch and view... I've thought a lot about this this week... looking at my own life. I know it's impossible to live in this world and not come into contact with sex... and that's not what Paul is saying... but I also know that some of you, the shows and movies you watch and books you read are so filled with sexual humor that your mind is saturated with it every night before you go to bed.
 - By the time the average kid graduates from high school, the average kid will have seen no less than 14,000 depictions of and references to sex.
 - Not even a hint means it should not be in your mind...
- **"Not even a hint" means you don't talk and joke about improper sex!** ⁴ **Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.**
 - I really struggled for a while this week with this one, too... because I thought, do I really violate this? I don't really have a Victorian sense of humor... sometimes I think "crude" things are

funny... (Ezell's 'machine': I was with a group of pastors this week who are all in churches our size or larger, and one of those guys had brought one of those... what do you call it...) Am I in violation to this verse? It may be poor taste, but that's not what he's talking about here...

- when he says crude joking, he's not talking about making jokes about flatulation... he's saying we shouldn't joke about sexual immorality...
 - in other words, guys, we shouldn't ever make jokes that objectify women; or talking about sex with women who are not your wife
 - or girls, we shouldn't read and discuss trashy romance novels or TV shows, or movies like *"He's just not that into you"*
- Our language and behavior should not be like that of people who are enslaved to sensual lust, and saturated by self-serving desire—there should not even be a hint of that in us... but instead we should sound like people who rejoice in and love God!

Vs. 3 again... (³ *But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.*)

- The other thing that should not be named among you is **covetousness**.
 - Covetousness means desiring, intensely, something you don't have to the point that you couldn't imagine being happy without it.
 - **Why is that not proper?**

- The same reason it would be improper for me to talk with my wife about how awesome another woman was. Imagine if every night I talked with my wife about how awesome someone else's wife was... *Wouldn't it be great to be married to her? I bet life with her is awesome.* Or if we walk past a girl in the mall and me say, "Man, I'd love to come to that every night." That's not proper for a guy who is married. In fact, it insults my wife. It's even more improper if I sat around and talked that way about her that way to you... You'd probably say, "Man... Veronica is not much of a woman if J.D. is always wishing for another." It would dishonor her.
- In the same way, for you to sit around all the time and covet things that you think you need to be happy is an insult to God.
 - In the next vs., vs. 5, Paul calls covetousness, "idolatry." We let something play the role of God in our lives. **God and His presence should be the one thing, the only thing, that we absolutely must have to be happy and content in life.**
 - When your attitude is, "I've just *got* to make this much money or I can't be happy." Or, "I just have to get into this school or I have to get this that job or that promotion," or, "Life is no good if I don't have a relationship with him or if I can't lose these 20 lbs..." That's improper, because it is insulting to God. You've given His place in your life to something else.
 - When you're not joyful in some circumstance you're in, you insult God in the eyes of the world, because you're telling them He's not enough. I'm not saying you're not sad or disappointed about certain things... of course not! I'm saying that underneath even your sadness is a joy that you are

God's and God is yours that can never be taken away.

See, vs. 4: (⁴... *instead, let there be thanksgiving.*) **Instead, our speech should overflow with thanksgiving and joy in God!** See how they are opposites? If you really worship and value God, in whatever circumstance you'll always give thanksgiving, because wherever you are or whatever you are going through, you have the presence and love of the Almighty God!

Vs. 5, #4th reasons Christians do righteousness: ⁵ *For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.*

- **(4) If we haven't given up our idols for God, we are not saved (v. 5)**
- Now, keep in mind, Paul here is talking to the church: evidently, a lot of people in the Ephesian church evidently thought they had an inheritance in the Kingdom of God, but they had not given up their sexual sin...
 - They thought, "Yeah, you know... we want God to be a part of our lives. Want to be saved... but we'll keep doing this stuff over here on the side. It's not that *bad*..."

⁶ *Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.*

- An age old deception... you can be a Christian and still do all these things...
 - In the church today you hear it a lot like this... "Accept Jesus, pray this prayer. One day you'll learn to obey Him..."
- **Paul says it plainly... You can't become a Christian and continue to practice idolatry and pursue sin**
 - **A story from the life of Jesus: RYR...** this guy would have made a great story. Moral, religious background; he was rich; all kinds of advantages! He could have helped out the building campaign, been a small group leader and

potentially an elder. *Jesus turned him away because He saw that there was a condition on his obedience.* This guy would let Jesus be Lord of everything except his money... and Jesus said "If I can't be Lord of all, I won't be Lord of all."

- So he says, "Renounce all you have and follow me." He's not saying every follower of Jesus will lose all their possessions, but he is saying that following Jesus means that nothing... NOTHING... can ever get in the way of obedience. And if God commands you to give all of it away to the poor, you do so. If he commands you to do tithe, you do so. And, if God tells you to go to Africa, then you go. And if God tells you shouldn't be dating this boy, or you shouldn't be sleeping together, you obey.
 - Other religions teach you that if you do more good than bad, you are fine. The Gospel says that the only way you can come to God is in complete surrender.
- The Gospel says that there's only one way to come to God, **unconditional surrender.**
- So, let no one deceive you with "empty words."
- Let me speak candidly: **Unfortunately**, a lot of churches have grown huge audiences with the "preaching of empty words"! We've told you "accept Jesus." As if Jesus were sitting around with his hat in his hand needing us to accept *Him*. He's the Lord, we need His forgiveness. He doesn't need to be accepted by us, we need to be forgiven by Him. I even heard 1 girl say, "I've accepted Him as Savior, just not as Lord yet." He's not a salad bar!
 - **When Jesus called followers, he told them:**
 - **take up cross** (for us, that's a sentimental symbol... for them, it was an instrument of execution and torture);
 - **renounce all you have** (turn over control of everything in your life to God... He speaks about something and you do what He tells you with it with no conditions)

- ~~and hate your father and mother and children;~~
(means: nothing came come in the way of your obedience, not even precious relationships like your mom and dad and your children)
 - You have to admit... *take up cross; renounce all you have; hate your mom and dad is different than ABC and pray the prayer and you'll be fine*
- Maybe we pastors have preached empty words to fill up our churches... but we're filling it up with people who have no inheritance in the Kingdom of God.
- Some of *you* have been playing games with God. You have never seriously come to Christ and made Him Lord. You have no inheritance in the Kingdom of God.
 - I'm not talking about those of you who genuinely struggle with sin... Talking to those who think you belong to God, but won't give up... a relationship, adultery, or a porn habit. *You think you've come to God, but you've never really taken this part seriously.* Warning: If you've not genuinely repented, you're not saved! You have no inheritance. And this applies to a lot of you out there... you're playing games with God. And He's not fooled. And you better wake up before your illusion is shattered before the throne of God.

Vs. 7, reason #5: ⁷ *Therefore do not become partners with them;* ⁸ *for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light* ⁹ *(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true)...* ¹¹ *Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them...*

2 things going on here in these verses:

(5) We do righteousness because we realize the sinful, idolatrous world is doomed

- ¹¹ **"unfruitful works of darkness"** unfruitful means: futile; useless; no point

- What's going on here... we realize there's no point in investing our lives in this world and in sinful passions because they have no future.
- ***When I first came to Christ, this is what I saw... I saw that the works of darkness were unfruitful. I realized that...***
 - *If there is a God, then He rules for eternity.* Ultimately, only those who live for Him will last for eternity, and everyone else will lose everything.
 - *I also knew that if there was a God, that His way was best, and ultimately He would make me happy, even if I didn't feel that right now.* I didn't always think, "Wow, I can see and feel how much better God is than sin. I believed it... now, 20 years later, I feel it. I see how much more joy there is in God. But I didn't feel that back 20 years ago when I first believed."
 - The reason I say that is some of you are wondering what's wrong with you...you don't 'feel' it... You're like, "You say there is more joy in God... but it seems to me like there is more joy in sin. It makes me happier." Yes, at 1st, sometimes, it's a faith commitment.
 - Picture a scene with me: Imagine you got a great job on 1 of the top floors of NYC's nicest buildings... cup of coffee. Making a huge salary... leaning back on your chair, put your \$600 Italian Pirelli shoes on your desk and look out your window. I mean, you've got it all... money, power... what else is there? But, one more detail... this scene is taking place in Tower #1 of the WTC on Sept 11, 2001 at 8 a.m. Puts it into perspective, doesn't it? What good is all of that... it's only going to last a few hours.
 - Coming to God means saying, "*God, I believe you are God, which means you are permanent and only those who live for you will last; and I also realize you are good and the source of all goodness, and only those who fill themselves with you will be*

satisfied. I may not 'feel' either of those things now, but I choose to believe in them and arrange my life around them."

- For example, maybe when I explain God's line of reasoning on sex you say, "That doesn't make sense to me at all." Fine, place your bet against God. You may just have to say... God, I know your ways are best, even if that doesn't completely make sense to me now.
- **Faith is living today in a way that you know one day you'll be glad you did**

There's one more thing going on in this passage: **(6) we want to honor God before a community of people who dishonor Him**

- ¹¹ *Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them...* ¹⁶ *making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.*
- We know we live in a doomed world, and most people live in darkness, so we want to live in a way they can see **the light of God in the midst of the darkness.**
 - **We are like the moon...** the night is dark. But every night the moon reflects the sun that is no longer visible. In darkness, when you can't see the sun, you can know it is there by how it reflects off of the moon. Means 2 things for you:
 - **We have to be up close to unbelievers...** (sometimes people have used this passage as an excuse to sequester themselves off from unbelievers... definitely not what it means, light can't shine the darkness if it is hidden in a closet.)
 - (some translations say "rebuke." Stand in their churches and rebuke the world... but don't get close... get dirty. That's not what the word means. The word means "expose." You live in a way that exposes the darkness they are in. Live in a way that

demands an explanation, and then be able to give that explanation. You have to be close enough for them to see that.

- Expose doesn't mean you go around walking through mall going, "You are dressed like a skank and God is not pleased with that."
- **"Expose"** means live in a way that begs a question. Expose. In everything you do, put Him on display! In our generosity, in our love, in our holy living... in our worship... The old phrase goes, "You're the only Jesus some will ever see and the only Bible some will ever read."
- **So, church, that's the question for us:** What kind of reflection are you giving about the nature and beauty of God? This passage would warn us that when you and I joke about sin... when we are stingy with our money... when we do sloppy work... when we are short tempered... when we worship all lacksodasically... we obscure others vision of God.
- **Church we are the ultimate apologetic for the Gospel in a skeptical world.** We have to show people the difference the glorious Jesus makes in our lives. Look for somewhere this week to do that!

Close today with an assignment: Make a list

- Generosity
- Patience
- What you talk about
- What you watch
- Your work ethic
- What you do with your free time
- How you drive (just for fun)

Ask, do I demonstrate the glory of Jesus to the world in these areas? Rate yourself 1 to 10. Then have your spouse rate you. Then ask God to help you apply the Gospel to that area.

Bow heads and let me ask you a question... Have you received the Gospel? As I explained at the beginning... it's a free gift. God's acceptance of you, forgiveness, His righteousness, the right to be His child, is given to you as a gift. Have you ever received it? You can right now... Just say, "Jesus, I receive the gift you offer, and I yield full control of my life to you. Change me and make me yours."

Bullpen:

- The commands... pursue God! A man cannot be pursuing his wife and running to adultery at the same time! You cannot be running to God and sin.
- This world is not our home... evil, dark place. Many of you have made this world your home.
 - You spend money on it... not on the next one.
 - You have no idea how your life is counting for the Kingdom. If you stood before God today and He said, "OK, what is the report of your life... how did you leverage and invest it for the Kingdom?" Nothing to say... "Good person; good to my family, sort of... went to church. But nothing where you strategically invested your talents and your treasures for God's kingdom."
- To be a disciple of Jesus means you are living for the same Kingdom He did.
 - Refused to build up earthly wealth... Nowhere to lay His head.
 - No such thing as a disciple who is not on mission.
 - *Are you a disciple?* Again, Take up cross; renounce all you have; hate your mom and dad is different than ABC and pray the prayer.

*Walk worthy of the Lord

*We love what God loves

*What is pleasing to God?

*Obedience to the law makes you become a part of the dark side

List of Parables

¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

- "Think through what's going to be pleasing to the Lord. (Wright, *Simply Christian*, 231)

¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, ²⁰ giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

¹² For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. ¹³ But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, ¹⁴ for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

We see His beauty, are overwhelmed by His love, and begin, as beloved children, to love what He loves.

So how does the Gospel bring that kind of change? *Gospel change = The Spirit of God using the story of God (the Gospel) to make the beauty of God come alive in your heart.* The Gospel overwhelms you with the sheer beauty of God, it shows you how much God has done to save you... that you're saved not because you've earned it, but out of a free gift God has given you, and you change in response to that love.

- You see, every religion in the world tells you to "obey, and you will be accepted." So you obey to be accepted. But the Gospel declares, "You are accepted, not because of anything you have done, but because of what Christ has done... in response to that, go and obey!"
- We call that "gift righteousness." One of the most important elements of Christianity: God's righteousness given to you as a gift, not as a reward for what you've earned. *In response to that, to seeing the beauty and power and grace of God freely given to you, you change.* You begin to love God and what is good and right.
 - On the cross 1 of the thieves who crucified with him was mocking him but suddenly realizes who Jesus is and says,

“Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus’ response is not... “Now, you’re getting what you deserve.” He responds like you would to a close friend going through a tough time: “Don’t be afraid, this very day, you’ll be with me in paradise.”

- Even when he spoke harsh words, or acted angrily, He was driven by love. In fact, He loved us enough to tell us the truth even if it made Him unpopular and made us kill Him.
 - When sex is done outside of marriage, it is destructive! It is like putting duct tape on your arm... if you do that, you should plan on leaving that duct tape there... pieces of you come off. Gradually the tape loses its stickiness.

Sex inside of a marital commitment is life-giving... outside it is emotionally destructive. **Sex in the fireplace?**

- And that life of love was like a continual pleasant fragrance to God.
 - More great imagery here...
 - There is nothing worse than a foul odor, and nothing better than a pleasant one.
 - **Your day can be ruined sitting next to somebody on a plane with b.o.** ... their clothes have that smell where they forgot to dry them and they soured... or a person with bad breath that just insists on talking this close to your face... “Tell me brother... HOW are you doing”
 - On the other hand, there are certain fragrances that are so pleasing... I love it when I encounter some smell and it takes me back to my mother making cookies when I was a kid... Pleasing fragrance
 - A life of love and holiness is a perfume to God... it delights Him!

- Jesus’ life was poured out in love as a fragrant offering for us... So, in response to that love, we love Him back, and we become that to others. Our life is a continual fragrance of love to others.
- And it’s all in response to Jesus. Motivation: #2. We love others as we have been loved.