

# Sophisticated Sophistry

Long Beach Alliance Church • May 10, 2015 • Pastor Chris Lankford

*Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them.*

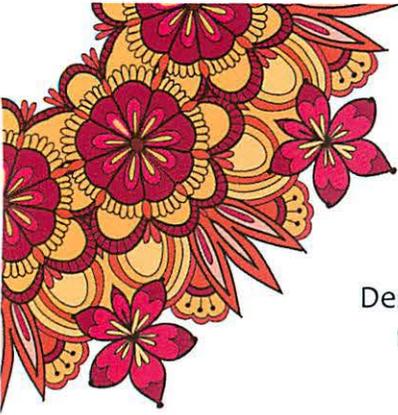
*~Ephesians 5:6-7 (NIV)*

## 1) You Were Saved By Sacrifice

- A) As God's beloved children (Ephesians 5:1) we follow the perfect example of Jesus Christ (the Son of God) in imitating God (5:2). God's love for His children is so great He provides us with both provision for our the problem of sin in Jesus Christ, and provision for ongoing peace and spiritual progress in the Holy Spirit.
- B) This is very good news because like the Ephesian people, we also live in a sexually saturated culture (5:3-4). Sexual sin uniquely kills the love of God in our lives because it replaces a self-sacrificial lifestyle with one of self-indulgence. Self-indulgence steals worship from God, replacing a "proper" life of thanksgiving (5:3-4).

## 2) Make No Mistake...

- A) Using a very rare and particularly pointed phrase, "for you may be sure of this..." (5:5), the Apostle Paul ties the two previous triads of self-indulgent sins (the first set focus on sexual activity - 5:3; the second set focus on sexual speech - 5:4) together with a final triad of self-indulgent descriptions (5:5). These descriptions serve to set the stage for a final set of three painfully significant statements (5:5-7).
- B) First, those who live according to their sexual appetites will not be included in the "kingdom of Christ and God" (5:5). In other words, if your identity is your sexual appetites, you are not among the "saints" (5:3), you are not among God's "beloved children" (5:1), and therefore, you are not an heir of the Kingdom of God.
- C) These verses are not meant for those in Christ, nor does this teach that Christians can cause the loss of their salvation (any more than a follower of Christ can cause the gaining of their salvation -- note 1:14, 18, 2:8-10). This is written to those who are in the church, but not in Christ; those who selectively choose what to believe and obey (note Matthew 23:1ff), rather than submit to Scripture as the rule for belief and practice.
- D) Second, those who live liberated from life in Christ often provide convincing and persuasive reasoning as justification for their disobedience (5:4, 6). Their arguments are often characterized as the most modern, tolerant, and sophisticated in the development of human history (Romans 1:18-32).
- E) But, just because an argument is convincing, doesn't make it right. Arguments which are opposed to God's creation only lead to further self-indulgence. Where does self-indulgence lead? It promises satisfaction while unwittingly delivering death. Those who do not submit to Christ may think of themselves as sophisticated and satisfied, but they are not beloved sons of God, they are sons of disobedience, destined for wrath (5:6).
- F) Third, those who are "in Christ" must vigilantly distinguish themselves from those who label themselves as Christians, but live according to their sexual appetites while presenting justification for their disobedience. Those who are "beloved children" of God (5:1) are not to "partner" (5:7) their lives or their possessions with those people who are not part of God's family (cf. 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1).
- G) The primary focus of this exclusivity is not isolation from an immoral world (cf. John 17:15), but distinction from immoral practices, from self-indulgence and the death it delivers. While our world cries out for fidelity to your own feelings and perceptions of self, Christians are called to walk in fidelity to our identity in Christ!



# Growth Group Guide

“sophisticated sophistry”  
ephesians 5:6-7 • may 10 – may 15

## Ice Breaker!

Describe a situation where you bought something you didn't really need or want because of the salesperson's pitch?

## Looking Up!

Read Ephesians 5:1-7. Ephesians 5:2 states “Christ gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” What does this mean, and why is it important?

Ephesians 5:5-7 highlights three very important statements. What are they and what is their significance?

## Leaning In!

Ephesians 5:6 warns believers to not be deceived “with empty words.” What does Paul mean by this? Describe an example of being deceived in this manner.

How can we keep from becoming deceived in our relationship with Christ?  
Why is the solution not as simple as verse 7?

## Stepping Out!

We are now in week 4. How has your growth group impacted Long Beach with respect to the Gospel?  
What is the Holy Spirit calling us to do?

## Respond!

Take time to inspect your own life.  
Do I truly believe in Jesus?  
Do I really trust Him in all aspects of my life?  
How do my actions reflect my belief?  
Have I repented?  
Do I feel I'm beyond Christ's forgiveness?  
How can I deepen my relationship with Christ?

## This Week In Action & In Prayer!

Make 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 the focus of prayer this week. In our world of sound bites and brevity, these verses are short and to the point. Christians are called to:  
rejoice always; pray without ceasing; and  
be thankful in all situations.  
Aim to embody these this week.

