

EPHESIANS 6:21-24

Love Incorruptible

Memory Verse

"Grace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Ephesians 6:23

Real-life Problems

As we grow up, our understanding of love is formed by what we see in pop culture, in movies and on television. We are given the understanding that love is a feeling. However, it is not long until we learn that love is a lot messier than what the shows portray. There are days when loving others is easy and days when it is harder. This is why God's command to us to love Him and love others can sometimes feel impossible. If our love were based on our feelings alone, we would fail. But God's command to love is not based on our feelings, but on His work in Christ.

The Good News

Through Christ's death and resurrection, we have been sealed by God, through His Spirit, into a love that is incorruptible. Now there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God in Christ.

I. Introduction

OPENING QUESTIONS

Idea #1: What is the best gift you have ever received? What made it so special?

Idea #2: Who is one person who has encouraged you the most in your faith? Why?

PRAY

Open your time together in prayer.

REHEARSING THE GOSPEL

What does gospel mean?

Good news

What's the good news?

Jesus died for my sins

Why did He die for your sins?

So that I can have abundant life in relationship with Him now and forever

What is grace?

God's love for undeserving sinners

REVIEW

1) What were the two reasons Paul wrote this letter?

1) To remind the church of the power of the gospel 2) To encourage believers to live in light of their new identity as the church.

2) Who was the original audience of this letter?

The church, or followers of Jesus Christ, in Ephesus

3) Where was Paul when he wrote this letter?

Paul was in prison for his work in spreading the gospel.

What's going on?

REMIND

We all face a daily battle against evil in this world. Yet, in Christ we have been given everything we need to stand firm in that battle. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus has already claimed our final victory in the battle and supplied us with His Spirit as the source of our strength in the battle.

TODAY WE'LL LEARN

- 1) In Christ, God's love for us is incorruptible.
- 2) Because of Christ, our love for God is incorruptible.

Read

Read **Ephesians 6:21-24** aloud in your group.

II. Questions for Discussion

A. WHAT?

1) Who is Tychicus according to verse 21?

A beloved brother (or follower of Jesus Christ) and a faithful minister in the Lord

2) Looking at verses 21-22, what are the three reasons Paul sent Tychicus to the Ephesians?

1) That they might know how he is doing 2) That they might know what he is doing 3) That he might encourage their hearts.

3) Paul starts off verses 23-24 with the words "grace" and "peace." Where else in his letter do you see Paul use these two words together?

In Ephesians 1:2, Paul starts and ends his letter with the same blessing of grace and peace.

4) In verses 23-24, Paul mentions love twice. Doing a little investigative work, where else in this letter is love mentioned? Read those verses aloud.

Have you students spend time looking back in the text to find these verses. They do not have to be read in order. Once they have found all they can, help point them to any they have missed.

Ephesians 1:4-5, 15; 2:4; 3:17-19; 4:2, 16; 5:2, 25-28, 33

5) Whose love is Paul describing in verse 24? What word does Paul use to describe this love?

He's talking about our love for God. He describes it as incorruptible.

6) Considering the context of verse 24, what does incorruptible mean?

If something is incorruptible, it is not able to be destroyed—it is everlasting. So, when we consider it in light of the context of this book and verse, it is a reminder that the love we have been given from God—the same love with which we love God—is a love that can never be destroyed and is forever. Through Christ, who is Himself incorruptible, so is our love.

B. SO WHAT?

1) Why would Paul want the Ephesians to know how and what he was doing?

Paul saw his ministry as more than sharing the gospel and planting churches. To Paul, his call was to give away his life for the sake of the gospel. He did not see himself as simply a missionary to the churches, but as a brother. He loved them. Take 1 Thessalonians 2:8 as an example, "so, being so affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us."

2) What do you think is significant about Paul opening and closing his letter with the same blessing of grace and peace?

Answers may vary. However, one of the important points to understand here is that by bookending his letter in this way, Paul is definitely placing an emphasis on these two words (as he does in many of his letters). The

grace and peace of God are not only the blessing, but are the cornerstone of much of Paul's arguments in this letter. No matter how challenging Paul was in his letter to the Ephesians, he is reminding them that, in all things, it is the grace and peace of God that serve as our foundation.

3) In verse 24, Paul describes the believer's love for God as incorruptible. What is significant about this type of love and what do you think makes it incorruptible? (Use the other love verses you looked up to help you.)

Paul is ending the letter with a reminder, a reminder to the Ephesians of all he has told them. Chapters 1-3 of the letter, Paul goes into great detail about God's love for the believer. He emphasizes the gospel truth that it was because of God's love for us that He saved us through Christ. Also, God's love is the reason why we are able to love one another. This is what makes love incorruptible—that Christ died and has been raised. Christ defeated death itself, and has been raised incorruptible (1 Cor 15), so His blessings are incorruptible and irrevocable (Rom 11:29).

Then in chapters 4-6, Paul goes on to show the many ways in which we now love God as we love His people and creation. The way that we love Christ with a love that is incorruptible is by walking faithfully in His love—which is incorruptible.

C. NOW WHAT?

1) How does the idea of incorruptible love encourage you in your relationship with God and His people?

Answers will vary. If this love is incorruptible, then it means that it is not solely dependent on our actions and also cannot be ruined by our failures. It is given from God and kept in Christ.

Egg Drop

Watch this video clip from minute 4:15-4:45 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TOuYADMgNGY>

A popular science project in many elementary schools is the egg drop competition. If you have never competed in one yourself, the premise is simple. Your objective is to create some type of container or carrier for a raw egg that, when dropped from a two-story building, will prevent the egg from breaking.

Just like in this video, you see that if you build the carrier well, it will keep the egg protected and secure. It is not that the egg is unbreakable, but that it is protected.

In the same way, this is what being kept in Christ looks like for the believer. It is not that we are incorruptible, but that the love of God is. And being sealed by the love, in the Holy Spirit, we too can claim incorruptibility in our love. And this is not because of our own strength, but because of God alone.

2) What would it look like for you to give your whole life away to the people God has put in our lives, such as your peers, team, friends, family, etc.?

Answers will vary. To give our lives away does not mean that we do not rest, create boundaries or seek opportunities for solitude—even Christ did these things. Yet, it also means that we count others as more significant than ourselves (Phil 2:3). It means we live a life of servant-leadership (Mark 10:45). It means being vulnerable enough not only encourage others, but that they might know how to encourage you.

3) How has Paul's understanding of love, in his letter to the Ephesians, challenged your understanding of love?

4) Thinking back on our whole time studying the letter to the Ephesian church, what has challenged you the most? What is your biggest takeaway?

Main takeaway

In Christ, God's love for us is incorruptible and, because of Christ, our love for God is incorruptible.

III. Closing

REMEMBERING THE GOOD NEWS

Through Christ's death and resurrection, we have been sealed by God, through His Spirit, into a love that is incorruptible. Now there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God in Christ.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, we confess that we often try to love You and others from our own strength. We praise You that, in Christ, You have shown us the only love that is truly incorruptible and that, because of Christ, we can now love You and others with that same incorruptible love. Help us to trust Your Spirit in us as our source of love for You and others. May Your gospel propel us to love radically, sacrificially, and joyfully. In Christ's name. Amen.

Supporting resources

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1) In what ways do I still act as if my love for God is based on my own efforts or performance?
- 2) How can I better love and encourage other Christians with the love God has shown me?
- 3) What is God calling me to do with what I have learned from studying Ephesians? If you are uncertain still, spend time now praying for God to show you.

QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS

- 1) What does incorruptible love actually mean? How does this encourage you in your relationship with God and His people?
- 2) What would it look like for you to give your whole life away to the people God has put in our lives, such as your peers, team, friends, family, etc.?
- 3) What has challenged you the most during your study of the letter to the Ephesians? What is your biggest takeaway?