Time to Take Out the Trash

Ephesians 5:1–5

Are you plagued with negative thoughts about yourself and others? As Christians we may not even realize how our wrong thinking is affecting our concept of God, life, ourselves and others. Don't let rubbish or trashy thinking litter your mind and ruin your life. We need to maintain daily clean up of our "stinking thinking" and take out the garbage.

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Our Country is concerned with climate change. Reducing and managing waste products is a major concern to local Councils. Every day, a steady stream of trucks drive down the freeway hauling huge loads of rubbish. The landfills are getting bigger every day and sometimes cover many acres.

Three truths about Trash – rubbish and waste are obvious:

It can cause health problems.
It doesn't leave by itself.
It has to be taken out regularly.
The same is true of the trash that accumulates in our minds. If we don't take it out, it can ruin our lives.

Trashy Thinking About Others

Most of us have developed a bad habit of judging other people without knowing all the facts. Jesus plainly warns us: *"Do not judge, or you too will be judged."* (Matthew 7:1).

When we judge others, we put ourselves in God's place, taking the authority reserved only for Him. We forget that other people are fighting their own inner battles and sometimes that conflict shows itself in irritating actions. But if our own behavior is imperfect, why do we expect better from others?

We can remove this kind of trashy thinking by practicing compassion and forgiveness. Only when we treat others the way Jesus treats us will we demonstrate the kind of love he wants us to have. (cp. Ephesians 4:31-32)

With his help, we can do this. We can make a little progress every day until we reach the point that we "*do to others as you would have them to do to you."* (Luke 6:31) We are to live and act like Jesus (Luke 4: 32-49). Note verse 46 — *"DO what I say."*

Trashy Thinking About Ourselves

Ironically, most of us are even harder on ourselves than we are on others.

Like our non believer brothers and sisters, we also get caught up in our society's culture. Every day, the

dominant message it sends is - "You don't measure up."

Whether it's a women's fashion magazine, a TV commercial about exercise equipment, or an ad for the latest vehicle, this daily bombardment tells us there's something wrong with us that their product can fix.

So we buy whatever they're pitching, only to find that after a few weeks (or even sooner), we feel as empty as we did before.

We need to take out this trashy appraisal of ourselves and replace it with God's view of us, expressed in his love, forgiveness, and acceptance. One glimpse of the cross is a stunning reminder of how precious we are to Jesus.

Why do we condemn ourselves, when God accepts us in his Son? (cp. Ephesians 1:6; Romans 15:7)

Trashy Thinking About God

Our most damaging trashy thinking is about God. Maybe we never express it openly, but our actions reveal our beliefs. We plunge ahead on our own because we think God's not trustworthy. We stagger under the burden of guilt because we think he's not forgiving. And worst of all, we feel alienated and alone because we think he doesn't love us.
The best way to rid ourselves of

these wrong ideas is to read God's autobiography, the Bible. The Gospels in particular reveal what God is truly like. Jesus tells us, *"Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father"* (John 14:9 NIV). (cp. John 14:23)

By comparing our beliefs to the truths in the Bible, we can identify our misconceptions and start to remove them. Taking out these trashy thought patterns takes courage and work. Because old habits are so hard to break, we need to ask God for help.

Thankfully, the Holy Spirit is eager to collect all our trashy thinking and take it away. He brings God's Word to mind *" … as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us*" (Psalm 103:12 NIV). (Cp. Romans 8:38-39)

Our success may be spotty. We may fall back into old habits unless we consciously catch ourselves and say, "No, that's trash. It's bad and it has to go out."

Notice what God tells us to do in **Ephesians 5:1-5.** We are to...

1—Imitate: "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children."

2—Act like Jesus did: "And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant. offering and sacrifice to God.

3—Clean up our sinful behavior: "But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints."

4—Take out the dirty trash: "Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving."

5—Remember who we are: "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."

Take a good look at your life. Think about what regularly occupies your mind. Think about the evil thoughts you dwell on and tolerate. Think about your negative, critical, attitude towards others. Think about your self condemnation. Think about how you question or doubt God, Christ, the Bible and the Church.

Trash left alone will go rotten and stink. It will pollute and produce harmful germs. Likewise we need to take our evil thoughts and like the organic trash we wrap in paper and put in the bin—take all of our evil thinking and throw it out. We must begin today!

It's time to take out the trash.

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Ephesians 5:1-5



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