

## Ephesians 5 ~ Scripture (NIV, 1984)

<sup>1</sup> Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children <sup>2</sup> and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

<sup>3</sup> But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. <sup>4</sup> Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. <sup>5</sup> For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. <sup>6</sup> Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. <sup>7</sup> Therefore do not be partners with them.

<sup>8</sup> For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light <sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) <sup>10</sup> and find out what pleases the Lord. <sup>11</sup> Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. <sup>12</sup> For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. <sup>13</sup> But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, <sup>14</sup> for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

<sup>15</sup> Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. <sup>18</sup> Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, <sup>20</sup> always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>21</sup> Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

### Wives and Husbands

<sup>22</sup> Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. <sup>24</sup> Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup> to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, <sup>27</sup> and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. <sup>28</sup> In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— <sup>30</sup> for we are members of his body. <sup>31</sup> "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." <sup>32</sup> This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup> However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

## Ephesians 5 ~ Discussion Questions

1. Do you see contrasts of “old” and “new” in your life? Where? Do you prefer wearing old, comfortable clothing or a new suit or outfit? Why? What do you do with old worn-out clothing?
2. What are the positive *and negative* motivations which prompt you to live a Christian life?
3. How are Christians to imitate God? (5:1-2) Is that really possible?
4. From what practices should Christians abstain? (5:3-6)
5. Whom do you need to avoid? (5:5-8, 2 Corinthians 6:14) Why should Christians not become partners with non-believers? Doesn't this seem contradictory since we are told to make disciples of *all* nations and reach out to *anyone* in need?
6. What does life in darkness really mean? How does it contrast with life in the light? (5:9-14)
7. Having contrasted light and darkness, Paul now makes another contrast. It is? (5:15-21)
8. Explain how Paul says that wives should submit to their husbands. What does Paul use as an example to wives? (5:22-24)
9. How are husbands to love their wives? Paul uses two examples; what are they? (5:25, 5:28)
10. How did Christ prepare a bride for himself? (5:25b-27)
11. Is the bond between husband and wife to be greater than the bond between parent and child? Is this usually how it is today? How do you suppose God feels about that? (5:31)
12. In this section, Paul has three verses of instructions to women 5:22-24) and nine to men (5:25-33). Why?
13. Why is unselfishness an essential part of a Christian marriage?
14. In the book, *Love & Respect*, Emerson Eggerichs says that in marriage a man needs respect and a woman needs love. Do you agree? Why or why not?

## Ephesians 5 ~ Leader's Guide

1. Do you see contrasts of “old” and “new” in your life? Where? Do you prefer wearing old, comfortable clothing or a new suit or outfit? Why? What do you do with old worn-out clothing?

Most lives have many contrasts of old and new. Before becoming a Christian and after is a common example. Having an addiction to alcohol or drugs versus living clean. Giving in to pornography and adultery versus being true to your spouse. Living a life in this world of greed and lust versus letting the Holy Spirit live in and through you. We give these examples, but do we really mean it? Have we really thrown off the old way? Have we gotten rid of the lies, anger, bitterness, malice, and sin or is it just that we would like to do so or, worse, are deluding ourselves into believing we have done so?

Clothing is a good example. I am certainly more comfortable wearing an old T-shirt, jeans, and sneakers than a new, starched shirt and tie. Moreover, even when I get new clothes, I hang on to the old stuff. I just don't want to let it go—just as I don't want to totally let my old life go.

2. What are the positive *and negative* motivations which prompt you to live a Christian life?

Putting this question another way, are you more attracted to the idea of going to live with God in heaven for eternity or avoiding spending your afterlife in hell?

Most people today don't admire Christians. Search for “Christians are” in Yahoo and you get hypocrites, crazy, ignorant, stupid, not perfect, evil, idiots, etc. If that's what people think of Christians, why would you want to live a Christian life? In most of the world, Christianity is on the decline—why go against this tide? Schools, colleges, government and businesses are all purging Christianity from their midst. Clearly, there is practically nothing in the world that promotes becoming a Christian—no reward, no admiration, no support. So I ask again, why are you motivated to do so?

For most people, the positive motivation to be a Christian does not come from the external world. When you become a believer, you are joined to Christ and begin to share in his experience and benefits, including death and resurrection. This is the work of God who transforms you by his Spirit. Your mind is renewed, your desires and actions change, and your life begins to reflect the fruit of the Spirit. You become a different person, gradually growing into the likeness of Christ. God calls you to turn away from your old worldly life and walk in a new way that pleases him; it is God's grace, his gracious working in your heart that gives you the desire and power to live a Christian life.

3. How are Christians to imitate God? (5:1-2, Romans 12:1) Is that really possible?

Paul says we are to imitate God by living a life of love, giving yourself to God as an offering or sacrifice. Love is not to just be affection but is to be self-sacrificing service. The NIV Study Bible ties this to the previous verses and says we should be kind and compassionate to one another and have a forgiving spirit.

Romans 12:1 – Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

The idea of being a “living sacrifice” contrasts to dead animal sacrifices and is also “living” in the sense of having the new life of the Holy Spirit living in and through you.

Is it really possible to imitate God? Imitate means “take or follow as a model” so, yes, we can imitate God although we certainly will never be exactly like him. That’s totally impossible.

#### 4. From what practices should Christians abstain? (5:3-6)

Lists of vices as in these four verses were common in Paul’s letters (Romans 1:29-31, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Galatians 5:19-21, etc.) This list has eight distinct items:

1) Sexual immorality meaning whoredom, fornication, homosexuality, bestiality, incest, premarital sexual relations, and surrendering of sexual purity. People often object to this today because they say times have changed, and what was wrong in biblical times is no longer considered sin. Well, maybe not by society, but it is still sin to God.

2) Any kind of impurity, in Biblical days usually meaning ceremonial uncleanness.

3) Greed or covetousness. Greedy people want certain things more than they want God therefore committing idolatry (see #7).

4) Filthiness or obscenity, includes both word and deed.

5) Foolish talk. Jamieson says this does not mean random, silly talk but rather “the talk of fools which is folly and sin together.”

6) Coarse joking, often at the expense of another person.

7) Idolatry. OT prophetic literature links idolatry to adultery (Hosea 1:2, Isaiah 57)

8) Disobedience to God

#### 5. Whom do you need to avoid? (5:5-8, 2 Corinthians 6:14) Why should Christians not become partners with non-believers? Doesn’t this seem contradictory since we are told to make disciples of *all* nations and reach out to *anyone* in need?

Paul says the believers should avoid any immoral, impure, or greedy person—an idolater. Avoid those who are disobedient. Avoid people of darkness. All these people have put other things ahead of God or in place of God, who therefore excludes them from his kingdom. These people do not “have any inheritance in the kingdom of God.” This does not mean they are excluded from the kingdom of God forever—if a person repents and asks for forgiveness, God will grant it—but a person who continues to turn his back on God will be excluded from the kingdom.

Although Christians have normal social relationships with everyone (as did Jesus), they are not to participate in the sinful lifestyle of unbelievers. Of course, as a Christian you should continue to encourage non-believers to repent and you should be helpful and compassionate to them, but you should not join your life to such people.

2 Corinthians 6:14 – Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?

6. What does life in darkness really mean? How does it contrast with life in the light? (5:9-20, 1 John 1:5)

This next section emphasizes the contrast between light and darkness showing that those who belong to him who is “light” (1 John 1:5 – This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all), i.e., pure and true, not only have their lives illumined by him but also are the means of introducing that light into the dark areas of human conduct. Light, by its nature, exposes what is in darkness (5:11) and the contrast shows sin for what it really is. Light makes everything visible, even things that disobedient people do in secret.

But interestingly, in 5:12 Paul says that even though you may become aware of what disobedient people do in secret, you should not dwell on these evils or make a big deal of them. In other words, avoid verbally accusing or condemning people. Yes, you should expose evil deeds (5:13) and take a stand for what is right because your silence could be interpreted as approval. A thin line to walk here.

7. Having contrasted light and darkness, Paul now makes another contrast. It is? (5:15-21)

Paul moves from light and dark to unwise and wise, the contrast between wisdom and foolishness. Jamieson says, it is not enough to be awakened, enlightened, walking; ours must be a wise walk—wise in the things of this life, or we may do serious injury to Christ’s cause—wise in respect of our own spiritual life—wise as regards those without and those within.

We must also use our time well and not let opportunities pass that will never return. By saying, “the days are evil,” Paul was expressing this urgency to keep our standards high, act wisely, and do good whenever we can, not just when it’s convenient.

What is the will of the Lord (5:17)? It’s spelled out well in these OT verses:

Deuteronomy 10:12-13 – <sup>12</sup> And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, <sup>13</sup> and to observe the LORD’s commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?

In verse 5:18, Paul is urging people not to get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery (excessive indulgence in sensual pleasures) but he is also using this to contrast being filled with wine versus being filled with the Spirit. There is something in common to both, namely that people can be under an influence that affects them foolishly (wine) or wisely (the Spirit).

He goes on effectively saying that lives filled with the Holy Spirit will be expressed in singing, joyful praise, music in your heart, and by thanking the Lord for everything—his saving grace, all your blessings, forgiveness, and including you as an heir to his kingdom.

Paul closes this section (or perhaps opens the next section) with verse 5:21 that says that Christians should submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. This applies to several specific relationships: wives and husbands, parents and children, slaves and masters, but also is a general admonishment for Christians and members of the church to work peacefully and lovingly with one another.

8. Explain how Paul says that wives should submit to their husbands. What does Paul use as an example to wives? (5:22-24)

The term “submit” could connote total obedience but the meaning here is different because of the closing phrase “as to the Lord.” Thus, the husband is not in the place of the Lord, but rather this indicates that the woman ought to submit to her husband as an act of submission to the Lord. When we submit to God, we become more willing to obey his command to submit to others. For a wife that means willingly accepting that her husband is the spiritual head of the family and acknowledging and following his leadership.

The analogy in 5:23 between the relationship of Christ to the church and that of the husband to the wife is basic to the entire passage (5:22-33).

Verse 5:24 clarifies that the wife’s submission to her husband is not to be in only spiritual matters but in “everything,” although Jamieson adds *everything* “pertaining to a husband’s legitimate authority; in the Lord (Col 3:18); everything not contrary to God.” But as one study bible points out, “A wise and Christ-honoring husband will not take advantage of his leadership role, and a wise and Christ-honoring wife will not try to undermine her husband’s leadership. Either approach causes disunity and friction in marriage.

9. How are husbands to love their wives? Paul uses two examples; what are they? (5:25, 5:28)

Paul’s two examples are “as Christ loved the church” and as you love your own body. He shows that this is not a one-sided submission, but a reciprocal relationship. He spends more than twice as many words telling husbands to love their wives as he did to wives telling them to submit to their husbands. How should a man love his wife? 1) He should be willing to sacrifice everything—even his life—for her. 2) He should make her well-being of primary importance, with special focus on her spiritual purity and instruction in the word. 3) He should care for her as he cares for his own body.

The basis for such expressions and for the teaching of 5:28-29 is the quotation from Genesis 2:24 in verse 5:31. If the husband and wife become “one flesh,” then for the man to love his wife is to love one who has become part of himself.

10. How did Christ prepare a bride for himself? (5:25b-27)

Christ gave himself up—to death through his crucifixion—for the church (remember, church then meant body or group of believers). In 5:26, Paul makes clear that the Lord Jesus died not only to bring forgiveness, but also to effect a new life of holiness in the church, which is his “bride.”

Verse 5:26 basically says that the church has been cleansed by the message of the Good News and we are set aside for his special sacred service. (But there’s a lot more going on in this verse, 5:26, in the concepts of “cleansing her [the church] by the washing with water through the word.” To dig deeper into this, look at John 3:5, 15:3, Titus 3:5, Hebrews 10:22, James 1:18, and 1 Peter 1:23, 3:21.)

11. Is the bond between husband and wife to be greater than the bond between parent and child? Is this usually how it is today? How do you suppose God feels about that? (5:31)

The union of husband and wife merges two people in such a way that little can affect one without also affecting the other. Oneness in marriage does not mean losing your personality in the personality of the other. Instead it means caring for your spouse as you care for yourself, learning to anticipate his or her needs, helping the other person become all he or she can be.

The relationship between husband and wife is, in fact, to be greater than the one between parent and child (“a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife”) although, as Chapter 6 will show, the relationship between parents and their children is also to be strong and valued.

Obviously, to most people in today’s society these commands are a joke. Of the 2,283,000 children born in 2006-2010 to a female parent under 20 years of age, only 14.7% were married. So clearly, the *only* bond is between mother and child. Of all children born to parents of all ages, 40.3% were not married.

12. In this section, Paul has three verses of instructions to women (5:22-24) and nine to men (5:25-33). Why?

The joking answer is that men just don’t get it and need three times as much instruction as women. Another is that men read the first instruction, like it and stop there. The real answer is that we don’t know why Paul wrote so much more to men. One can speculate that the joke is actually true and men really do need that much more pounding on the heads before the message sinks in.

13. Why is unselfishness an essential part of a Christian marriage?

We’re not going to analyze the reasons that some marriages last for a lifetime and some end in divorce (or worse). But selfishness plays a huge role in a marriage lasting or not. In these verses, Paul expresses a high regard for marriage, reflecting God’s view.

Here are some recent divorce statistics. Among Christian denominations, the divorce rate is lowest among Lutherans (21%) and Roman Catholics (21%) and highest among evangelical (non-denominational) Christians (34%) and Baptists (29%). Mainstream Protestants fall in between at 25%. Jews are at 30%, atheists at 21% (the lowest).

More to the point, what are the top reasons for divorce? Do you see selfishness, lack of respect, and lack of love at the core of any of these?

- 1) Extramarital affairs, adultery
- 2) Weight gain
- 3) Money and finances
- 4) Physical, emotional and mental abuse
- 5) Incompatibility in lives, interests, and dreams
- 6) Addiction (alcohol, drugs, gambling)
- 7) Parenting style and priorities
- 8) Age

- 9) Lack of individual identity
- 10) No shared vision, different priorities
- 11) Lack of intimacy and sexual problems
- 12 ) Unmet expectations
- 13) Inability to resolve conflicts

14. In the book, Love & Respect, Emerson Eggerichs says that in marriage a man needs respect and a woman needs love. Do you agree? Why or why not?

The book is built upon the theory that the “primary emotional needs” for men and women, respectively are that men need respect and women need love, like they need air to breathe. Eggerichs describes a “Crazy Cycle” which illustrates that “without love, she reacts without respect and without respect, he reacts without love.” The book goes on to describe an “Energizing Cycle” and a “Rewarded Cycle” that can bring a marriage closer to the holy, loving Christ-like relationship that Paul describes in Ephesians.

Paul ends this section with 5:32 that urges each husband to love his wife as he loves himself, and every wife to respect her husband in all situations, not just when she thinks he deserves it.