

Ephesians Chapter 5

Be Ye Therefore Mimics of God - Ephesians 5:1-7

Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;

As in all of Scripture, when we see a “therefore” we must ask, “what is it there for?” The “therefore” in verse one refers back to the truths mentioned at the end of chapter four, namely the fact that we must let all bitterness, anger, wrath, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from use and forgive one another just as God forgave us. Because of the great forgiveness given to us in Christ, we should be followers of God. The word for “follower,” *mimetai*, means “to mimic.” We should mimic God in the way in which we forgive other believers who sin against us. In other words, verse one of chapter five completes the thought begun in the last verse of chapter four (chapter breaks are not part of the inspired text of Scripture.)

How do we most mimic God? When we forgive others. In fact, someone has said that men are most like God when they forgive the sins done against them. Because of this great truth, there is no room in the body of Christ for a person who has an unforgiving and bitter Spirit. The petty sins and insults we do against one another are nothing compared to the sin we have done against a holy God. We should forgive one another, if for nothing else, because of the great forgiveness we have received from God.

The Positive Command - Ephesians 5:2

And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

Paul continues his exhortation to mimic God by encouraging us to walk in love as Christ walked in love. The concept behind walk is that of a continuous lifestyle. Our entire demeanor and manner of life should exhibit God’s love worked out in us. In 1 John 4:12 we read, “*If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.*” How is God’s love manifested in the world? It is manifested in the way we love on another. Just like a radio picks up the invisible waves around us and converts them into sound, so we as believers pick up the love of God and convert it into visible action for those around us to see.

Love, 1 Corinthians 13 Style

- 1. Love is to be preferred over the ability to speak with the tongues of men or angels - 13:1.**
- 2. Love is to be preferred over the gifts of prophecy, knowledge, and faith - 13:2.**
- 3. Love is to be preferred over self-sacrifice - 13:3.**
- 4. Love suffers long (*makrothumeia*) - 13:4.**
- 5. Love is kind returning good for evil - 13:4.**
- 6. Love is not envious but always rejoices in the good fortune of others - 13:4.**

7. **Love is not boastful always drawing attention to itself - 13:4.**
8. **Love is not puffed up with pride - 13:4.**
9. **Love is not rude but courteous to others - 13:5.**
10. **Love is not self-seeking - 13:5.**
11. **Love is not easily provoked to anger (*paroxuno*)- 13:5.**
12. **Love does not keep books on injustices or insults done against it (*logizomai*) - 13:5.**
13. **Love does not rejoice in sin but revels in the truth - 13:6.**
14. **Love bears all things in that it desires to suppress the evident sins of others - 13:7.**
15. **Love believes the best about people - 13:7.**
16. **Love hopes for the best - 13:7.**
17. **Love endures all trials and tests - 13:7.**
18. **Love is unfailing - 13:8-13.**

How did Christ love us? He loved us by sacrificing himself for us. Love always manifests itself to others in action, not feeling. In 1 John 3:16-18 John writes, “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.” John’s point is that love is manifested in action. God’s love was manifested in Christ’s sacrifice for us, and our love towards others is manifested in our willingness to lay down our lives for them as well as sharing this world’s goods to meet their needs.

The Negative Contrast - Ephesians 5:3-7

But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them.

In contrast to the positive command to love, we find the negative ways in which we are not to act towards others. Love is always concerned about the welfare of the recipient, the opposite of love, lust, is only concerned about the welfare of oneself. In these four verses we find a list of those actions and attitudes which are in direct contradistinction to love. Those who exhibit these vices have no right to consider themselves to be part of God’s kingdom, and in fact Paul tells them point-blank that they have “no part in the Kingdom of Christ and of God.”

Fornication

The word for fornication, *porneia*, refers to all classifications of deviant sexual behavior. It includes such activities as adultery, homosexuality, bestiality, masturbation, and any other expression of sexuality outside of marriage.¹ Whereas love seeks for the purity and holiness of the one who is loved, lust seeks for the self-gratification which can be obtained by the use of the one being lusted after. A man who says he loves a woman only to take advantage of her, or vice-versa, is not exhibiting love but lust.

Uncleanness

Uncleanness, *akatharsia*, refers to sexual uncleanness.² Whereas *porneia* refers mainly to external acts, *akatharsia* refers to the general corruptness of thinking and lifestyle that leads to immorality. Specifically, it is used to refer to the lustful passions, thoughts, and fantasies which ultimately find fulfillment in fornication.

Dealing With Impure Thoughts

1. **Avoid every appearance of evil - 1 Thessalonians 5:22.**
2. **Avoid thinking on that which causes temptation - 2 Corinthians 10:5.**
3. **Memorize Scripture dealing with the area of temptation which you desire to have victory over - Psalm 119:9-11.**
4. **Renew your mind by filling it with the things of God - Romans 12:1-2.**
5. **Develop an accountability relationship with one or two other people - Hebrews 10:25.**

Coveteousness

Coveteousness, *pleonexia*, is used in reference to greed. It is the same word used back in Ephesians 4:19 and is translated there as “greediness.” A person who is characterized by *pleonexia* can never get enough. They pursue immorality and material gain with a passion, only to need more and more to satisfy their evil desires and lusts.

Filthiness, Foolish Talk, Jestng

All three of these vices deal with the tongue.³ Filthiness, *aischrotas*, refers to disgraceful talk. It is the speech of those who like to share dirty jokes. Foolish talking, *morologia*, is empty talk, the talk of fools. Jestng, *eutrapalia*, refers to something that can be turned. It is the talk of the late-night talk-show host who takes innocent statements and twists them into something dirty. All three of these vices are evident to those who are steeped in sexual immorality and greed. This kind of talk is in distinction to the language of the truth believer. We are reminded of Paul’s exhortation in Colossians 4:6 which says, “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, so that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.”

¹ TDNT, VI, pp. 579-95.

² John MacArthur, *Ephesians*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), p. 200.

³ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, p. 201.

Exclusion From the Kingdom

Those who practice the above vices make it very clear by their lifestyle that they have no part in the Kingdom of God. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 Paul speaks of the Corinthian believers when he writes, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Note that the Corinthian believers were characterized by their sinful lifestyles, but now they are washed and sanctified. It is not correct to say that a person can be a believer and yet be known as a whoremonger, greedy person, or idolater. The manner of one's life is a dead giveaway as to whether or not they are a true believer. Because we are different, we should not exhibit behavior that is consistent with those who are on their way to eternal punishment.

The actual verb form in verse six is that of a prophetic present. God's judgment is so sure and so real that it is actually spoken of as having occurred in the past although it is future.⁴ Those who practice evil are every bit as much under God's wrath today as they will be in eternity future.

Vance Havner used the illustration one time of a duck. He said that if he saw something that looked like a duck, walked like a duck, quacked like a duck, and swam like a duck, it was probably a duck. If one looks like the world, acts like the world, talks like the world, then most likely one is of the world. He further stated that to speak of a carnal Christian is like talking about a heavenly devil. The terms just do not go together.

Christianity According to John

1. A believer is one who walks in the light - 1 John 1:7-8.
2. A believer is one who confesses their sin - 1 John 1:9-10.
3. A believer is one who obeys Christ's commandments - 1 John 2:3; 5:2-3.
4. A believer is one who does not love the world - 1 John 2:15-17.
5. A believer is one who continues in the faith - 1 John 1:18-24.
6. A believer is one who loves other believers - 1 John 3:16-18; 2:6-11; 4:20-21.
7. A believer is one who purifies himself - 1 John 3:3.
8. A believer is one who does not practice sin - 1 John 3:4-6.

Walk In The Light - Ephesians 5:8-14

Paul continues the contrast between the walk of the unbeliever and the walk of the believer by using the metaphor of light. Light is a most apt metaphor of spiritual truth as it most graphically describes the effect the Holy Spirit has on those who are dead in their trespasses and sin. Just as light exposes the dirt and imperfections of a dirty room, so spiritual light

⁴ William Hendricksen, *Galatians and Ephesians*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), p. 230.

exposes the sin and corruption of our lives. Just as light enables us to walk without stumbling, so spiritual light enables us to walk in holiness and in a manner pleasing to God. Just as those who do evil avoid the light so that they are not caught, so those who commit sin avoid the light of God lest their deeds be reprov'd and they be exposed for what they really are.

In the book of Psalms we find light connected with God, his Word and truth many times. In Psalm 27:1 we read, "*The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?*" Here we find that light is connected with the Lord and his salvation. Psalm 43:3 which reads, "*O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.*" connects light with God's truth. Psalm 119:105, "*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*" connects light with God's word, along with Psalm 119:130 which reads, "*The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.*"

Light In the New Testament

1. **Light is a picture of the revelation of God's truth to those in darkness - Matthew 4:16; Luke 2:32; John 12:46; John 12:35-36; 1 Peter 2:9.**
2. **Light is a description of the character of a Kingdom Citizen - Matthew 5:14-16; Romans 13:12.**
3. **Light is a general description of a believer who is called a "child of the light" - Luke 16:8; John 12:36; 1 Corinthians 6:14; Ephesians 5:8-9; 1 Thessalonians 5:5; Colossians 1:12;.**
4. **Light was used as a title for Christ - John 1:4-9; John 8:12; John 9:5.**
5. **Light is a picture of spiritual truth which exposes evil - John 3:19-21; 1 John 1:5-7; 2:8-10.**
6. **Light is used to refer to the effect the Gospel has on the unbeliever - 2 Corinthians 4:4-6; Ephesians 5:14.**
7. **The Lamb will be the light of the New Jerusalem - Revelation 22:5; 21:23.**

Darkness in the New Testament

1. **Darkness describes the general spiritual state of the unbeliever - Matthew 4:16; Luke 1:79; John 1:5; 3:19; 8:12; 12:35.**
2. **Darkness is used to describe the eternal state of the lost - Matthew 8:12; 22:13; 25:30; 2 Peter 2:4; 2:17; Jude 1:6; 1:13.**
3. **Darkness is used as a reference to Satan's kingdom - Acts 16:18; Ephesians 6:12; Colossians 1:13.**
4. **Darkness is used to refer to the character of the unbeliever - Romans 13:12; 2 Corinthians 6:14; Ephesians 5:8-11.**
5. **Darkness is used to refer to spiritual ignorance and unbelief- 1 Thessalonians 5:4; 1 Peter 2:9; 1 John 1:5-6; 2:9-11.**

In distinction to light is darkness. Those who dwell in spiritual death exhibit the exact opposite characteristics of those who dwell in spiritual light. In this section of Ephesians five Paul lists five features of a walk in light.⁵

The Contrast - Ephesians 5:8

For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

The first feature we note is the contrast between what we were and what we are. Again we make the point that salvation is not addition, it is transformation. We were darkness, now we are light. Outside of Christ we not only did not know divine truth, we had no way to find it, and furthermore we did not even know what we were missing. We existed in a state of spiritual blindness and darkness. However, when we became a believer, the darkness was turned to light with the result that we actually became light.⁶ In other words, we not only exist in a state of spiritual light, but we actually become radiators of that spiritual light to those around us.

This is the idea expressed by Christ in Matthew 5:17. Christ commands the Kingdom Citizen to "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." When we live a godly life those around us are drawn to the light and as a result they can see God in us. Note, however, this light is not generated by ourselves, but is generated by God who dwells in us. In a way, we become a reflector of the light of God in much the same way a small mirror becomes a reflector of the glory of the sun.

Since we are children of the light, Paul commands us to walk as children of the light. This is the great paradox of the Christian life. We are holy, now we need to live like it. We have been released from the tyranny of sin, now let's not sin. We have been delivered from the darkness, now let's not walk as though we were still in darkness. The great task for the believer is to strive in order that their state match their standing. Only when we allow God to work through us will this happen as we yield ourselves to his power within us (Galatians 2:20; Philippians 2:14).

The Characteristics - Ephesians 5:9-10

(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.

Here we find the three-fold character of one who walks in the light. First, one who walks in the life exhibits the fruit of goodness. The word for goodness, *agathosune*, refers to that which is good in both nature and effectiveness. It refers to the inward goodness that comes as a result of what we are in Christ. Christians are to be intrinsically good as they have been transformed by the Spirit into Christlikeness.

Secondly, one who walks in the light exhibits righteousness. Their life is a life characterized by that which is holy and righteous. This righteousness is not something that they produce on their own, but it is a righteousness produced by the righteous one which dwells within.

Thirdly, one who walks in the light walks in the truth. This has to do with personal integrity and honesty. The word of the believer is one that should be accepted without question as they

⁵ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, pp. 206-14.

⁶ R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians*, (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1990), p. 164.

have proved that they are people of their word. Additionally, a believer should be an honest person, cheating or taking advantage of no one.

What happens when these three characteristics are evident in the life of one who walks in the light? They prove that what they claim to be they in fact are. The word for prove, *dokimazo*, refers to testing with the result of proving the genuineness of that which is tested. The test of true Christian belief is a life lived which is full of goodness, righteousness, and truth.

The Command - Ephesians 5:11a

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,

Positively, one who walks in the light should exhibit goodness, righteousness, and truth. Negatively, one who walks in the light should have no fellowship with those who practice a lifestyle opposite that of goodness, righteousness, and truth. The word for fellowship, *sunkoinonia*, refers to sharing in something with others.⁷ Believers should not associate with those who practice evil as their evil will ultimately corrupt the character of the believer.

Note that the works of darkness are unfruitful works. The idea here is that as far as eternal fruit is concerned, only those who practice a life filled with goodness, righteousness, and truth will receive a reward. Those who do not practice such virtues are unfruitful in the sense that they will receive no eternal reward but instead will be punished.

The Commission - Ephesians 5:11b-13

...but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.

In addition to not associating with those who do evil, the believer is to go further and reprove and expose evil. How is this done? First of all, it is done by the mere fact that one who walks in the light will of necessity expose evil because of their very existence. When a believer and an unbeliever are put side-by-side, it is very evident that the believer will by their very nature expose the evil of the unbeliever. This is what Christ said in John 15:22-24, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." Christ's point is that his existence exposed the hypocrisy and sin of those who hated him.

Secondly, not only is the believer to passively expose evil by their nature, but they are to expose evil by their confrontation. John the Baptist confronted the sin of Herod and lost his life. Christ confronted the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and Sadducees and ultimately was nailed to a cross. Christians are called to confront evil in their own personal lives, the life of the Church, and in the world. Of course, this will make the Christian unpopular, but that is exactly what Christ said would happen in John 15:22-24.

Remember, it is the light that exposes evil (the best understanding of the phrase, "for whatsoever doth make manifest is light" is "for it is the light that makes everything visible"). The reason many times believers do not expose the evil around them as they should is because they are too busy struggling with the evil in their own lives and as a result their

⁷ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, p. 211.

light is not as bright as it should be. Again we note that we need to strive in order to make our standing match our state.

The Call - Ephesians 5:14

Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

Paul now turns his attention away from those who walk in the light, true believers, and calls to those who are dead to come to the light. This verse, which is somewhat of a paraphrase of Isaiah 60:1, is thought by many commentators to be an excerpt from an early hymn of the church⁸. It is a call to those in spiritual darkness to wake up and come to the light.

Some think that this call is incongruous with the clear teaching of Ephesians 2:1-7 which clearly shows that a person outside of Christ is spiritually dead, and as a result cannot respond to the truth even when it is presented clearly to them. They would argue that it does not make sense to call a spiritually dead person to life, especially since a spiritually dead person cannot respond to the truth on their own.

The answer to this is to see God's call to spiritual life to include the enablement to respond to those who are the elect. Although the general call to spiritual life is given to all, only those who are elect will be able to respond as the Holy Spirit does his work of regeneration. A good example of this concept is Christ's call to Lazarus in John 11. Lazarus, we remember, was dead and as a result could not respond to a command to rise again. How then did he respond? It was because God resurrected him and *then* he was able to hear and obey the command.

Seven Commands For Children of the Light - Ephesians 5:15-21

In-between Paul's extended discussion of relationships in Ephesians 5:22-6:9 and his exhortation to walk as children of the light in Ephesians 5:8-14 we have seven commands given to us as children of the light. In very practical terms Paul describes exactly how to live as children of the light.

Command 1 - Walk In Wisdom - Ephesians 5:15

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise

The first command is to walk in wisdom. The word translated "See then" is *blepetai*, and has the idea of "be alert, watch, be careful." The wise walk is a walk that comes as the result of being very alert and aware of what is going on around us and how events of our lives impact our Christian testimony. This concept is further strengthened by the use of *akribos*, "circumspectly," which means "carefully, alertly, closely examining the implications of."⁹ The wise walk is one that requires a great deal of concentration and effort.

Unfortunately, many Christians treat the Christian life as something that is not that important. The lolly-gag through life and tiptoe through the tulips as though what they do does not matter. What we do does matter, as our lifestyle has eternal implications for ourselves and for others, sometimes for the better, and sometimes for the worse. Whether we like it or not, we are impacting people by our lifestyle. Let's be sober and vigilant so that we present a Christlike character and walk to those who observe our lives.

⁸ Hendricksen, pp. 234-236.

⁹ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, pp. 218-19.

Wisdom In the Old Testament

<i>hokemah</i> ¹⁰	This term, used 26 times in its verb form, is used to speak of wisdom in terms of a manner of thinking and attitude regarding life's experiences. It is a moral wisdom founded in the truths revealed by God and lived out in the life of one who is obedient to God's commandments.
<i>ben</i> ¹¹	<i>Ben</i> , used over 247 times in the Old Testament, has the basic idea of "between", hence, "to judge between or put space between to things." The noun form, <i>binah</i> , refers to understanding, specifically, moral understanding or the ability to discern between good and evil. It is most often translated "understanding" in the Wisdom literature, specifically Job 28:28; Proverbs 3:5 and 23:4.
<i>sakal</i> ¹²	Although this word is pretty much synonymous with <i>binah</i> or <i>hokemah</i> , it has the additional nuance of referring to <i>why</i> something is right whereas <i>binah</i> refers to the ability to <i>discern</i> the right choice. See Isaiah 41:20, Proverbs 21:12; and Jeremiah 9:23.

How does one go about walking wisely? First of all, one will walk in wisdom as they understand what God expects of them. This is most evident in the Old Testament where wisdom was closely related to the way one conducted themselves in life. One who disobeyed God's commandments and lived in sin was not considered to be wise.

Secondly, one walks in wisdom when one is very careful to avoid sin. It is one thing to know what God expects, and quite another to do it. Many times believers find themselves in sin because they were not careful about where they were going. In Pilgrim's Progress Christian and Faithful often found themselves in trouble when they were not careful about where they were going. When we inadvertently expose ourselves to sin and temptation we are not being wise.

Thirdly, the walk of wisdom requires an understanding of how one's life now impacts eternity. One who trades that which cannot endure for something that is eternal is a fool. Jim Elliot had the right perspective on life when he said, "He is no fool to give up that which he cannot keep in order to gain that which he cannot lose."

Fourthly, a wise walk will result in a knowledge of God. Proverbs 1:7 says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." A proper understanding of God and his character is a necessary prerequisite for being wise. Furthermore, one who lacks a proper view of God is not wise but is a fool.

Wisdom in the Wisdom Literature

1. **The Person of Wisdom is God - Job 11:6; 36:5; Psalm 104:4.**
2. **The Giver of Wisdom is the Lord - Proverbs 2:6-7.**

¹⁰ Harris, Archer, Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT)*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), pp. 645-47.

¹¹ TWOT, pp. 103-04.

¹² TWOT, pp. 877-78.

3. **The Source of Wisdom is the fear of the Lord - Job 28:28; Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7.**
4. **The Pursuit of Wisdom requires an open mind and diligent effort - Proverbs 2:2; 4:5-7; 5:1; 7:4.**
5. **The Effect of Wisdom is happiness and joy - Proverbs 3:13.**
6. **The Value of Wisdom is beyond calculation - Proverbs 8:11; 16:16.**

Who Is A Fool?

1. **A Fool is one who rebels against God - Psalm 14:1.**
2. **A Fool is one who despises wisdom and instruction - Proverbs 1:7; 15:5; 18:6.**
3. **A Fool is one who practices evil - Proverbs 13:19; 14:9.**
4. **A Fool is one who speaks without thinking - Proverbs 16:22; 15:2; 19:11; 17:28; 18:7.**
5. **A Fool is one who is subject to divine punishment - Proverbs 26:3; 19:29.**
6. **A Fool is one who thinks that their way is right - Proverbs 12:15; 26:12; 28:26.**

Command 2 - Redeem the Time - Ephesians 5:16

Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

The second command is that we redeem the time. The word for redeem, *exagorazo*, was used to refer to buying something out of the marketplace. It has the idea of finding a good deal and making the purchase. Time is *kairos* which denotes time in terms of its fixed boundaries. Used here with the definite article it denotes the time given to us for service. One of the tasks we as believers need to be involved in is making the most of every opportunity for service, as we do not know what will happen tomorrow.

Why do we need to be concerned about redeeming the time? First of all, we need to redeem the time because we are finite beings, and we have no assurance that there will be a tomorrow to serve the Lord. For all we know we may die tonight. Secondly, we may not have an opportunity for service tomorrow. The window of opportunity and service may be gone as the doors are closed by circumstances or tragedy. Thirdly, we need to redeem the time because God's clock is ticking and there is coming a day when there will be no more opportunity to serve as we will be in heaven with him and his judgment will fall on the earth. Noah preached for 120 years, but there came a day when he preached his last sermon, the door was shut, and the entire world perished. Finally, only when we make the most of every opportunity can we rest assured that we are expending maximum effort to serve the Lord. Most believers never get around to doing anything for God because they are so tied up in the things of this world that they never look beyond to eternity. We live in cataclysmic times and we only have so many opportunities to impact others for eternity. We cannot afford to be asleep or careless. If we are to do anything for the Lord, it must be done today as we may not have a tomorrow.

Brevity of Life

Psalm 90:12 *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.*

Job 7:6 *My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope.*

James 4:14 *Whereas ye know not what [shall be] on the morrow. For what [is] your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.*

If there is any message in the Bible, it is the message of urgency. Men are encouraged to repent today, as they may not have a tomorrow (2 Corinthians 6:2). The writer of Hebrews warns his readers to be careful lest they neglect salvation as slide past the harbor of salvation and be dashed on the rocks of divine judgment (Hebrews 2:1-4). Further on in Hebrews, the writer of Hebrews urges his readers not to harden their hearts but respond today. The only time we have and can be sure of is the current moment.

Command 3 - Understand God's Will - Ephesians 5:17

Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

The first two commands are now summed up in this command which is that we understand God's will. There has been much written on this topic which has probably resulted in more heat than light. Many try to discern God's will by putting out fleeces, making deals with God, or playing Biblical "roulette." All of these methods are fruitless as God has made it very clear what his will is for us. Many think that God hides his will like the Easter bunny hides eggs. As we frantically scurry around trying to uncover his will he sits in heaven and says, "you're getting warmer."

How does one go about discerning God's will? How can we know that what we are doing is what God wants us to do? How do we find out his long-term plans for our lives? All of these are important questions and deserve a good answer.

First of all, God has already revealed a great deal of his will to us. Many people run around trying to figure out who God want's them to marry or where God want's them to go to school when they are living in direct disobedience to the Scriptures. When one is living in sin and rebellion to God's will as revealed in the Bible they have no right to ask God about something he has not revealed. The first step in discerning God's will is to do what he has already commanded.

God's Will In The Bible

1. **God's will is that we be saved - 1 Timothy 2:3-4.**
2. **God's will is that we be Spirit-filled - Ephesians 5:18.**
3. **God's will is that we be sanctified - 1 Thessalonians 4:3.**
4. **God's will is that we be submissive - 1 Peter 2:13-15.**
5. **God's will is that we suffer when called upon to do so - 1 Peter 2:20.**

5. **God's will is that we be thankful in all things - 1 Thessalonians 5:18.**
7. **God's will is anything we want as long as we have obeyed his will in the preceding six areas.**

If you are living your life in accordance with God's revealed will, then you can confidently ask God to reveal his special will for you. The following steps will prove helpful in this process.

Step 1 - Do What The Bible Says

This goes without saying and is in fact foundational to any decision in life. For example, the Bible clearly says in 1 Corinthians 6 that we should not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. Therefore, it does not take a rocket scientist to figure out that God does not want us to marry an unbeliever. God has also revealed that he hates divorce, therefore, except for the case of continuous and flagrant adultery on the behalf of our spouse we should not seek a divorce as a believer.

Step 2 - Each Decision Should Glorify God

The second step in discerning God's will is to ask ourselves if our decision will glorify God. If it does not, then it is not God's will since he desires that we glorify him in whatever we do or say. If the decision we are contemplating in any way brings dishonor to God, then it is the wrong decision. A good example of this is that there are some things that are legal to do, but not right to do. If it is questionable, then we should avoid it.

Step 3 - Be Willing To Submit To God's Sovereignty

Many times we want to make a decision and then go to God for approval. That is not the way it should work. We need to make every effort to honor God in our actions and decisions, make the best decision we can, and then be willing to have that decision changed or altered by God's sovereign plan.

Step 4 - Make The Decision You Want To Make

If you have diligently sought to obey God's revealed will in the Scriptures, if you are consciously seeking to glorify God, and if you are willing to submit to God's sovereignty, then make the decision you want to make. In Psalm 37:4 we are given a wonderful promise which says, "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." This verse is telling us that if we delight ourselves in the Lord, he will be putting his desires into our hearts. Therefore, our desires are not arising from our own lusts but from the implanted desires of God for us.

Conclusion

We need to remember that God is not a celestial Easter bunny hiding his eggs and watching in amusement as we try to find them. Rather, he greatly desires that we know and do his will. By following the above steps we can rest assured that our decisions are the right decisions.

The Two "Wills" of God

1. **His *determinative* will by which he sovereignly brings to pass what he desires - Ephesians 1:9-10.**

2. **His *desirable* will by which he longs for all to repent - 2 Peter 3:8; Matthew 23:37-39.**

The Three “Wills” of God For Us

1. **His *perfect* will is that which he would like to perform in our life.**
2. **His *permissive* will is that which he allows us to do when we rebel against him.**
3. **His *punitive* will by which he chastens us when we disobey him and live in sin.**

Command 4 - Be Filled With the Spirit - Ephesians 5:18

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

Whereas the first three commands given in this passage had to do with the will of God, the last four have to do with the Holy Spirit. The first of these commands is that we be filled with the Spirit, the last three have to do with the results of that filling, namely singing, saying of thanks, and submission to one another.

This verse has been the source of much confusion. Some go to this verse to prove that the drinking of alcoholic beverages is prohibited by the Bible. Although it is clear from the Scriptures that the drinking of alcohol has caused a lot of grief in human history, this verse was not given to speak to the abstinence issue. Others go to this verse to find some mystical meaning to the phrase “*filled with the Spirit.*” To them the filling of the Spirit is some second-step in the Christian life.

I think that this verse is neither of the above, but is given to merely give us an illustration as to how a child of the light is supposed to live. Just as a man who is drunk is controlled by alcohol, so we who are true believers should be controlled by the Holy Spirit. One who is drunk has every facet of their life touched by the effects of the alcohol in their system. Their thinking is muddled, their breath smells, and their coordination is off. In the same way, one who is filled by the Spirit should have every facet of their life touched by the Spirit. Their thinking should be characterized by God’s thoughts. Their actions and attitudes should be in accord with the commands of God as revealed in the Bible.

The Negative Contrast

Paul’s statement is very clear. The child of the light should not be drunk with wine which is in excess. Even in Biblical times, those who drank to excess and became drunk were looked down upon. According to what we know about life in those days, wine as used in the Bible was less than three percent alcohol, which would almost classify it as a non-alcoholic beverage.¹³ Wine was made from diluting a paste of boiled grapes with water in order to produce a palatable drink. Since the alcoholic content was low, one had to linger long beside the wine (drink a lot) in order to get drunk. In fact the word translated “given to much wine” in 1 Timothy 3:3 is *paroinos* which literally means “beside wine.” An elder is not to be a man who lingers by the wine so that he becomes controlled by it. To do so disqualifies him from being a spiritual leader in the Church.

¹³ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, pp. 235-37.

Even a cursory reading of the Bible will make it very clear that drunkenness is a sin and was spoken of in very derogatory terms. Everywhere we find drunkenness in the Bible, we find problems. Why a child of the light would want to be associated with that which has caused so much grief and devastation in human history is unthinkable. Additionally, a child of the light should not be drunk because that would be dissipation. The word translated “excess” is *asotia*, and refers to something that was unredeemable or unsavable. Those who are consumed by alcohol in a sense become so totally controlled by it that it will eventually destroy them.

Wine In The Bible

sikera (Greek)	Wine which had a very high alcohol content.
shekar (Hebrew)	Most often translated as “strong drink”.
gleukos (Greek)	Wine which had just been made from grapes.
tirosh (Hebrew)	It had a very low alcohol content and was in essence “grape juice.”
oinos (Greek)	Most often used word for wine. This was made by diluting a thick paste with water to produce a drinkable “grape-ade.” The alcohol content of this wine was very low, like around 2-2.5 %.
yayin (Hebrew)	

Drunkenness¹⁴

- **Noah got drunk right after the flood which ultimately resulted in Ham being cursed- Genesis 9:20-29.**
- **AAORN’S sons got drunk on their ordination day and were consumed by fire from God for desecrating the tabernacle - Leviticus 10:1-9.**
- **Lot’s daughters got their father drunk in order to have children - Genesis 19:31-38.**
- **Ben-hadad got drunk and was spared from slaughter only by the disobedience of Ahab - 1 Kings 20:16-24.**
- **Belshazzar got drunk and lost a kingdom - Daniel 5.**
- **Some of the Corinthian believers got drunk at the Lord’s table and were divinely killed - 1 Corinthians 11:27-30.**
- **Proverbs mocks those who would be drunk - Proverbs 23:19-33.**
- **Habakkuk curses those who would get their neighbor drunk - Habakkuk 2:19.**
- **Isaiah cursed those who would rise early to get drunk - Isaiah 5:11; 28:7-8.**
- **Drunkenness is one of the works of the flesh - Galatians 5:19-23.**
- **Drunksards have no part in the kingdom of God - 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.**

¹⁴ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, pp. 230-32.

Eight Questions Regarding Wine¹⁵

1. **Is Today's Wine the Same as That in Bible Times?**
2. **Is It Necessary?**
3. **Is It The Best Choice?**
4. **Is It Habit Forming?**
5. **Is It Potentially Destructive?**
6. **Will It Offend Other Christians?**
7. **Will It Harm My Christians Testimony?**
8. **Is It Right?**

The Positive Command

Instead of being drunk with wine like the pagans, the child of the light should be filled with the Holy Spirit. The word for filled, *pleroo*, refers to something that is so filled that it is overflowing. The child of the light should be so controlled by the Holy Spirit that God's character overflows and is readily evident to others. The verb form for *pleroo* is in the present passive imperative tense. As such it should be rendered, "be being kept filled." In other words, the filling of the Spirit is not an act performed once in a while like going to the gas station to get your automobile filled with fuel, rather it is a mode of life in which one is always kept full. It is like keeping your automobile's gas tank full at all times. Furthermore, this filling is not accomplished by us, but by the Holy Spirit as we allow him to fill us.

Four Helpful Comments About *Pleroo* in Ephesians 5:18¹⁶

1. **It is in the imperative mood which means it is a command.**
2. **It is in the plural form which means it is for every believer.**
3. **It is in the passive voice which means the filling comes from the Spirit as well allow him to fill us.**
4. **It is in the present tense which means that it is to be a continuous action in our lives.**

Pleroo also has three additional meanings which help us understand what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit.¹⁷ First, it was often used to refer to a ship's sails that had been filled by the wind. The idea here is that just as the wind fills the sails of a ship and moves it along, so the Holy Spirit should move us. Secondly, *pleroo* has the idea of permeation. The Holy Spirit should permeate every aspect of our life. Finally, *pleroo* has the idea of total control. This is

¹⁵ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, pp. 235-44.

¹⁶ John R. Stott as quoted in Charles R. Swindoll, *Flying Closer To The Flame*, (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1993), pp. 80-81.

¹⁷ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, p. 250.

borne out by Paul's contrast with wine. A believer should be totally controlled by the Spirit so that all they say, do, and think are in line with God's desire for us.

The primary method whereby one becomes filled with the Spirit is that one walks in the Spirit. What does walking in the Spirit mean? It means that every day, every hour of the day, and every minute we consciously do what God wants us to do. When we are faced with a decision our first thought is that of obedience to the Word of God.

The secondary means whereby one is filled with the Spirit is to have the Word of God dwell in them richly. The parallel passage to this verse in Colossians 3:16-17 tells us to have the Word of God dwell in us richly. Since in both passages the results are the same, we conclude that being filled with the Spirit is identical to having the Word of Christ dwell in us richly. Therefore, we need to be in the Word and have the Word in us in order to be filled with the Spirit.

Finally, being filled with the Spirit of necessity means that we confess our sins in a consistent and immediate manner. We do not allow ourselves to fall in patterns of sinful behavior, as that quenches the Spirit. 1 John 1:9 tells us to "continually confess" our sins as God will "continually forgive" our sins. Those who live in a condition of sin are guilty of quenching the Holy Spirit and as such will never experience his power, peace, and indwelling presence.

What The Holy Spirit Does For Us

- 1. The Holy Spirit permanently indwells the believer - John 14:16-17.**
- 2. The Holy Spirit is our divine pledge that God will fulfill his promises to us - 2 Corinthians 5:5.**
- 3. The Holy Spirit bears witness with us that we are God's children - Romans 8:16.**
- 4. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us in prayer - Romans 8:26.**
- 5. The Holy Spirit produces fruit in our lives - Galatians 5:22-23.**
- 6. The Holy Spirit illuminates the truth of God to us - 2 Corinthians 2:14-15.**

What Filling of the Spirit Is Not¹⁸

- 1. It is not a dramatic and esoteric zap into another stage of spirituality.**
- 2. It is not an act of the flesh which is a product of stoic obedience.**
- 3. It is not the same as possessing or being indwelt by the Spirit.**
- 4. It is not a process whereby we progressively get more of the Spirit in doses.**
- 5. It is not the same as being baptized by the Spirit.**
- 6. It is not the same as being sealed or secured by the Spirit.**

¹⁸ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, pp. 247-48.

Command 5 - Sing To One Another - Ephesians 5:19

Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

The first result of being filled with the Holy Spirit is that we have been given a song in our heart. In fact, it should be obvious that of all the people who can sing, the believer is the only one who has the reason. We have been redeemed from the bondage of sin and given a new home in heaven. If anything should bring joy to our hearts, it should be the fact that we are redeemed. That alone should cause us to break out in joyous praise to God.

The words used in this verse, *psalms*, refers to songs about God and his nature. In fact, the entire Old Testament book of Psalms is full of these kinds of songs. Hymns, *hymns*, has the idea of praise songs to God for the many wonderful blessing he has bestowed upon believers. Singing, *ado*, has to do with lifting up the voice in song. "Making melody" comes from *psallo*, which referred to "plucking a stringed instrument." Paul's use of these words indicates the full range of music that believers should use in praise and worship to God.

Song In The Bible

1. **Many times we are commanded to sing a new song to the Lord - Isaiah 42:10; Psalm 149:1; 96:1; 33:3.**
2. **We are to sing praises to God for who he is - Psalm 147:1; 144:9; 98:4; 68:4.**
3. **Singing is intimately associated with worship - 2 Chronicles 5:13; 29:27-28; 1 Chronicles 25:6; 16:42; 6:31-32.**
4. **There were at least 4,000 temple singers - 1 Chronicles 25:7.**
5. **Singing is a natural response to God's deliverance and is closely related to rejoicing - Nehemiah 12:27; Luke 15:25; Isaiah 35:10; 48:20; 51:11.**
6. **The lack of singing and a song is a part of divine judgment - Isaiah 16:10; Psalm 137:2; 26:13; Revelation 18:22.**
7. **Heaven is full of song - Revelation 14:3; 5:8-9.**

Command 6 - Give Thanks For All Things - Ephesians 5:20

Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

The second result of the filling of the Spirit is that of thanksgiving. To think that a believer who has been brought from death to life would be ungrateful to God is unthinkable. We have been so richly blessed with that which we do not deserve that it is inconceivable that we would not be grateful to God for what he has done. After all, we deserve eternal punishment in hell for our sins, but instead we get heaven.

For what is a believer to be thankful. We are told that it is for "all things." The Greek word "all" means "all." There is nothing for which we are not to be thankful since everything we have is infinitely more than we deserve. The root of a unthankful heart is the concept that we

deserve more than we have. Not so! The very fact that we are alive at this moment and not in hell is a gift beyond comprehension. The believer is to be thankful for all things.

For What Are We To Be Thankful?

1. We are to be thankful for the Savior of the world - Luke 2:38; 2 Corinthians 9:15.
2. We are to be thankful for victory over death - 1 Corinthians 15:57.
3. We are to be thankful for triumph in the difficulties of life - Colossians 2:6-7; 2 Corinthians 2:14.
4. We are to be thankful for deliverance from evil - 2 Corinthians 1:10-11.
5. We are to be thankful for our eternal inheritance - Colossians 1:12.
6. We are to be thankful for the coming righteous rule of God - Revelation 11:16-17.
7. We are to be thankful for God's abundant sufficiency for us, in us, and through us - 2 Corinthians 9:8-12.
8. We are to be thankful for the Lord's supper, which is a picture of His death on the cross which provided deliverance from sin - Luke 22:15-19.
9. We are to be thankful for Christian friends- Romans 16:4; Ephesians 1:16; Colossians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:2; 3:9; 2 Thessalonians 2:13.
10. We are to be thankful in response to preaching and worship - 1 Corinthians 14:16-17.
11. We are to be thankful for our leaders - 1 Timothy 2:1-2.
12. We are to be thankful for food - Matthew 15:36; Acts 27:35; Romans 14:6; 1 Timothy 4:3-4.
13. We are to be thankful for all things - 2 Corinthians 8:16; Ephesians 5:4, 20; Philippians 4:6-7; Colossians 3:17; Hebrews 13:15; Colossians 4:2.

Command 7 - Submit To One Another - Ephesians 5:21

Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

The final result of the filling of the Spirit is mutual submission to one another in the Body of Christ. The idea here is that in the Church, the universal body of Christ, there is to be no formal structure. In the local assembly of believers God has ordained leadership, but in the universal body of Christ there is no one who is in charge.

Why is submission important? Where there is a lack of submission there is all kinds of problems. Instead of seeking the best for others, we become interested in advancing our own agenda or our own interests. As a result, the unity of the body suffers and the Church becomes ineffective. Also the opposite of submission is rebellion. The first sin in the universe was that

of Satan's rebellion against God (Isaiah 14:12-14). From that point on until the beginning of the eternal state this world has been a pocket of rebellion in God's universe. Men refuse to submit to God, and as a result they will be sent to a place outside of God's presence forever.

The idea that a believer should be a rebel is unthinkable. When we look at the pattern of Christ, who voluntarily submitted himself to the will of the Father, became a man, and died on the cross, we understand that there is little we can do to improve on that. Even Christ's sufferings as described in 1 Peter 2 were done in submission to the plans and purposed of God. If God is sovereign, then of necessity we should be submissive to him.

This submissiveness should also carry over into our human relationships. We should voluntarily submit to the authorities God has placed over us as an act of obedience to him. This is the subject of the rest of Ephesians chapter five and the first nine verses of Ephesians chapter six. Paul talks about the submission of wives to husbands, husbands to Christ, children to parents, and employees to employers.

Why is this aspect of submission so important. It is because God has ordained social institutions through which he mediates his rule on the earth. Although it is true in the ultimate sense that all men are accountable only to God, nevertheless for the working of an ordered society God has ordained a chain of command. He has established three social institutions which are critical to an ordered society.

First, God ordained the family in Genesis 2:24. The foundational building block of any society is the family. Without it, all other institutions break down. Within the institution of the family God has ordained that the man be the head of the family, that the woman voluntarily subject herself to the leadership and headship of her husband, and that the children be subject to their parents.

The second divine institution is that of government. This institution was first established in Genesis 9:6 and expanded in the years right after the flood. God has given human governments the authority to take life for life in the case of murder. In the New Testament, believers are commanded to be subject to the governmental authorities set over them by God as a testimony to the world. Only when the government specifically orders a believer to disobey God does the believer have the right to disobey the government.

The third institution is that of the Church. Christ established the Church in the second chapter of Acts. Within the Church Christ is the head, and the elders are under shepherds, serving under the Chief Shepherd who is Christ (1 Peter 5:4). Members of the Church are called upon to be subject to their elders and to follow their leadership as they would follow the leadership of Christ himself (Hebrews 13:7).

In the redemptive sense, which is not an institution but is necessary to consider, the Holy Spirit subjected himself to the Son, just as the Son subjected himself to the Father. There is no hint of inferiority/superiority here, but there had to be a voluntary submission within the Trinity for the purposes of redemption. Right now Christ is subject to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24-28), and will one day turn everything over to God so that God may be "all in all."

Therefore, it is very clear that God has ordained a clear line of authority in the world through the institutions of the family, the government, and the Church. To rebel against any one of these institutions is to rebel against God.

To Whom Are We To Submit?

1. **We should submit to one another in the Body of Christ in the sense that we consider the needs and desires of others over ourselves - Philippians 2:1-4; 1 Corinthians 16:16.**
2. **Wives should submit themselves to their husbands as unto the Lord - Ephesians 5:22.**
3. **Husbands should submit themselves to the Lord - Ephesians 5:23.**
4. **Children are to submit to their parents - Ephesians 6:1-4.**
5. **Employees/slaves should submit to their employers/owners - Ephesians 6:5-9.**
6. **We are to obey the governmental authorities placed over us - Peter 2:13; Romans 13.**
7. **We are to submit to the leadership of the elders within our local church - Hebrews 13:7.**

What Submission IS and IS NOT

It IS NOT a matter of inferiority or superiority.

It IS NOT a matter of worth or importance.

It IS NOT a matter for debate or discussion.

It IS a commandment of God.

It IS an act of volutary humbling oneself for the good of another.

It IS a requirement for maximum effectiveness in the cause of Christ.

God's Divine Pattern For Relationships - Part 1 - Ephesians 5:22-33

The Role and Responsibility of the Wife - Ephesians 5:22-23

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

The exhortation to submit to one another in the Holy Spirit is now dealt with in the areas of marriage and work. Although it is very clear from the Scriptures that spiritually we are all equal, nevertheless God has ordained different roles within society. This is not indicative of inferiority or worth, it is merely necessary for the proper functioning of society. This is in direct opposition to what we are being told today, where it seems the norm is to rebel against authority of any kind. The woman who works at home raising her children is told to get out of that puritanical situation and find herself a career. The husband who is endeavoring to provide for his family is told to find himself, which usually means he runs off with a younger

woman and less responsibility. We live in a society that exalts self over responsibility, so when the Bible speaks to us of our duties it seems outdated and something to be ignored.

However, God's plan is still the best plan. When we ignore his commandments and rules for living we will pay a high price. Therefore, as we examine the role of the wife and the husband we need to be very careful to see them as commands and not suggestions. We must not make the mistake of comparing God's truth with the shifting ideas and notions of men.

The responsibility of the wife is clearly seen in Ephesians 5:22. She is to be subject to her own husband in the Lord. Although the word "subject" is not in the verse, it is implied from the previous verse. Also, the verb is in the middle voice which means the woman is to subject herself voluntarily to her husband. Note further that she is not to obey her husband, as the children are commanded to do, rather she is to subject herself to her husband. The difference is important. Whenever a child is given a reason for a command, that is grace. However, the wife and husband share an equality which allows the wife to readily give advice and opinions to the husband. She is not to be a mindless slave, doing whatever the master says. Rather, she works together with her husband. However, in the final analysis, it is the husband who must make the final decision and therefore it is the husband who is held responsible for the decision.

The Manner Of The Wife's Submission

- 1. It IS NOT to be done grudgingly.**
- 2. It IS to be done voluntarily.**
- 3. It DOES NOT mean she ceases being her own person or that she forfeits all rights to give her opinion on matters.**
- 4. It IS to be done in a reverential and respectful manner.**
- 5. It DOES NOT mean she must obey her husband when he asks her to do something which is sin.**

Why should the wife be subject to her own husband? It is because to do so is fitting in the Lord. The word for fitting, *aneko*, was sometimes used to refer to that which was legally binding.¹⁹ The wife's submission to her own husband is not an option, but is in actuality something expected by the Lord. To refuse to submit is sin.

A second reason given as to why the wife should submit is found in Ephesians 5:23. Just as Christ is the head of the Church, so the husband is the head of the wife. Some would like to say that head, *kephala*, does not refer to headship in the sense of authority, but headship in the sense of source.²⁰ This is a forced interpretation and one that is foreign to the context of the passage and also to the context of 1 Corinthians 11:3. A quick reading of 1 Corinthians 11:3 will show that to infer that the man is merely the source of the woman is to infer that God is the source of Christ. Clearly the latter is not true, and is in fact heresy. Christ is co-eternal with the Father. However, in the redemptive plan, Christ willingly submitted himself to the Father and as such the Father became the head of Christ. Just as Christ was subject to the Father, being an equal, so is the woman to be subject to her husband.

¹⁹ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, p. 282.

²⁰ John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *Rediscovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, Appendix 1* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1991), pp. 425-68.

The Meaning of Kephala, Head, In 1 Corinthians 11:3

Two popular viewpoints are offered in understanding the meaning of the word “head” in 1 Corinthians 11:3, that being source and authority.²¹ Many who would support an expanded role for women in the church and family insist that the word *kephala*, head, means source and not headship. Thus, they would say that 1 Corinthians 11:3 cannot be used to prove the headship of the man over the woman. This argument appears to be further bolstered by the implication in verses 4-7 that it was common for women to pray and prophesy in the Corinthian church. Can *kephala* be construed to mean source? Consider the following:

1. Although both renderings are possible, the translation of headship is the most predominant in the New Testament.
2. Paul’s use of *kephala* in Ephesians 5:22ff is clearly that of headship, not source.²²
3. If the “source” of the woman is man, then the “source” of Christ is God. This creates some theological problems in light of the eternity of the second person of the Trinity. Christ is co-eternal and co-equal with God. Only in the plan of redemption does Christ take a subservient role to the Father. To deny otherwise is to fall into the heresy of Subordinationism, in which Christ is seen as eternally subordinate to the Father.

Thus, it should be apparent that the rendering of *kephala* as “source” is a forced interpretation and not one that flows naturally and clearly from the text. Paul is saying that there is a divine order within creation and the redemptive plan, that being the woman under the man, who is under Christ, who is under God.

Another related issue is that of the woman’s role within the home. We may say that it is clear that the woman is to be in subjection to her husband, but what about duties outside the home? Is it permissible for a woman to work outside the home? The answer, according to Scripture, is yes...but.

In Proverbs 31 we read about the model woman. She is one who manages her own household as well as engages in business activities outside of the home. Although she buys a field and has an outside source of income, her first and foremost priority is the home. The Bible never forbids a woman to work outside of the home, however, it does teach that her first and primary responsibility is to the home and to her family. If she has fulfilled those duties, then seeking outside employment is acceptable.

The problem today is not that women work outside of the home, but that their activities outside of the home has taken precedence over their responsibilities within the home. As a result, they turn their children over to day-care centers to raise while they enter the workforce to find themselves. Because of this we have an entire generation of children growing up who do not spend any real time with their parents, but instead are shuffled around from one babysitter to another. In fact, a recent survey showed that the average father spent less than 45 seconds in real conversation with their children. Mothers are leaving the home at a record pace while

²¹ See *Rediscovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, Appendix 1 for an exhaustive treatment of this issue.

²² See also Ephesians 1:22, Colossians 2:10, and Colossians 1:18.

families disintegrate and children grow up as practical orphans. It is folly to trade one's family for a career, yet that is what many women do.

Older Women and Younger Women in Titus 2:3-4

After the older men, the next group to be addressed by Titus is the older women. These most likely were women who had passed their childbearing years and entered the realm of grand parenting. Titus is commanded to tell the older women that they were to be reverent in their behavior, refrain from gossip, be sober, and teachers of good things.²³ The word "teacher" is interesting. It is the word, *sophronizo*, which means "to train to self control." Just like the older men are to be sensible, so are the older women, and furthermore, the older women are to pass that on to the younger women.

The younger women, instead of being instructed by Titus, are to be instructed by the older women. It is here that we see the appropriate exercise of the gift of teaching for women. Instead of teaching men, or the corporate assembly, they are to teach the younger women. What is it that they are to teach? They are to teach the younger women to be in submission to their own husbands and keepers at home.²⁴ They are to train the younger women to be godly wives and mothers so that the word of God is not blasphemed among unbelievers.

Paul amplifies his argument regarding the wife's submission in Ephesians 5:24 in which the wife's submission to her husband is compared to the Church's submission to Christ. There is little argument about whether the Church is subject to Christ, it is almost an assumed axiom. Therefore, why should there be a debate about whether the woman is subject to her husband or not?

Again, just because the wife is subject to her husband does not mean that she is inferior to her husband in any way. God has given both men and women equal spiritual rights (Galatians 3:28). However, in the institution of the home, as divinely established by God, the wife is to be subject to her husband. Not only is this a command of God, but it is patterned after the Church's submission to Christ.

The Role and Responsibility of the Husband - Ephesians 5:25-32

Most men who read this passage stop at the previous verse and use it to beat their wives over the head. Unfortunately, they fail to see that whereas Paul wrote three verses to the wife, he now writes eight verses to the husband, almost three times as many. Why is this? It is because the husband has a great responsibility towards his wife, and to abrogate that responsibility brings God's chastisement.

The Command - Ephesians 5:25a

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church...

The wife's responsibility is that of submission, the husband's responsibility is that of love. He is to love his wife with the same kind of love that Christ exhibited to the Church when he gave himself for it. The husband is not the master of his castle, ordering his wife around. Rather, he is to be a man who loves his wife to such an extent that her natural response will be

²³ John MacArthur, *Different by Design*, pp. 158-160.

²⁴ *Different by Design*, pp. 160-162.

to submit to his leadership in the home. In fact, if a man loves his wife as Christ loves the Church, his wife will have very little problem submitting to him. Only when he begins to lord his authority over her does the curse in Genesis three come into play, and the struggle for power begins.

The love in this verse is the *agape* love of God. It is a sacrificial love that knows no boundaries or limits. It is not the kind of love promised by one man to his fiancée when he said, "I would climb the highest mountain for you. I would swim the largest ocean and cross the driest desert. And if it is not raining tonight I'll be over." The love the husband is to give his wife is to be so great that if it were necessary he would give his life for her. A woman who is loved like that will have no problem being submissive to her husband.

Note further that this is a command. A man is not suggested to love his wife, nor is he encouraged to love her. A man is commanded to love his wife. It is invalid for a man to say that he no longer loves his wife and therefore wants to divorce her to marry someone else. Love is a command, and as such must be obeyed whether one feels like it or not.

What Paul now does is to describe this *agape* love the husband is to have for his wife in four qualities. It is to be a sacrificial love, a purifying love, a caring love, and an unbreakable love.

Quality #1 - A Sacrificial Love - Ephesians 5:25b

...and gave himself for it;

The first quality of love a man should have for his wife is that of a sacrificial love. How sacrificial? So sacrificial that if necessary he would die for her. Too often men go through life oblivious to the needs and desires of their wives. As a result, their marriages are never as fulfilling as they could be if they would just take some time to sacrifice something they want for the benefit of their wife. Unfortunately, today's super-woman not only holds down a full-time career, but she then goes home and cooks supper, does the laundry, and cleans the house, all while her husband is watching television. A man who loves his wife sacrificially desires to do things that please his wife, and does not consider it a duty or obligation done grudgingly.

Suggestions For Husbands To Love Their Wives

- 1. Give them a day off by taking care of the kids while the wife does something she wants to do.**
- 2. Cook supper for her, and then clean up afterwards.**
- 3. Spend time with her, doing nothing except maybe going shopping or for a walk.**
- 4. Be courteous to her, by opening car doors and exhibiting good manners in public.**
- 5. Praise her in public. Never make fun of her to others in a derogatory manner.**
- 6. Give up something financially that you want in order to do something nice for her. Give up a new set of golf clubs to buy her a desired piece of furniture or take a mini-vacation away from the kids.**

Quality #2 - A Purifying Love - Ephesians 5:26-27

That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Not only is the husband to have a sacrificial love for his wife, but he should also have a purifying love. This means that the husband should never want to do anything, or ask his wife to do anything, that would be wrong or impure. Not only is this to be the norm for marriage, but it should carry over into the pre-marriage years of dating. A man who desires to commit fornication with a woman outside of marriage is not interested in her purity. Rather, he is only interested in his own selfish desires.

How Does A Husband Violate His Wifes Purity

- 1. A husband will cause his wife to sin if he withholds sexual relations with her thereby forcing her to fantasize or fall into adultery.**
- 2. A husband will cause his wife to sin by asking her to participate in questionable amusements or activities which may be all right for him but not for her.**
- 3. A husband will cause his wife to sin by encouraging her to wear inappropriate fashions.**
- 4. A husband will cause his wife to sin by not protecting her from those who would take advantage of her.**

Paul amplifies this quality of love by comparing it to Christ's love for the Church. Christ did not redeem the Church only to encourage it to sin. In fact, Christ's death was meant to accomplish the exact opposite, that of purifying those who were sinners. Why would Christ die to deal with the sins of the Church only to turn around and encourage it to sin? To do so would be inconsistent with the divine plan. In the same way, the husband should be extremely interested in the purity of his wife, and as such should never ask her to do anything that would violate or jeopardize her purity. He should jealously guard her purity as Christ guards the purity of the Church.

Quality #3 - A Caring Love - Ephesians 5:28-30

So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

Thirdly, a husband is to love his wife with a caring love. By this Paul means that a man should care for his wife just like he cares for himself. No one in their right mind will abuse their bodies and try to cause their body harm. In the same way, no man should try to abuse his wife and cause her harm. He is to love her just as he loves himself.

Again, Paul illustrates this point by comparing the relationship between the husband and wife to that relationship between the Church and Christ. Christ cares for the Church. He is the provider and protector of the Church as well as the one who dispenses blessings and honor on the Church. In the same way, the husband is to care for his wife by providing for her physical needs and protecting her from those who would try to do her harm.

Quality #4 - An Unbreakable Love - Ephesians 5:30-31

For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

The fourth quality of love required by the husband is that of an unbreakable love. Unfortunately the world today treats marriage as a dispensable contract. If a marriage does not work out, well, that's OK, just go and find someone better. This is best summed up by the billboard in Los Angeles advertising divorce lawyers that read, "Sick of your husband? Call us and we will help you unload that turkey." In distinction to the world, the love that the believing husband should have for his wife is that of an unbreakable and eternal love which will endure until death.

In Christ's day, and in Paul's day, marriage was under assault. Even within Judaism there were two major sides in this debate. The Rabbi Hillel taught that a man could divorce his wife for most any reason, including burning the supper, saying something against his mother, or any number of such issues. In fact, Hillel taught that if a man saw another woman that he liked better, then he was free to divorce his wife and marry the other woman. On the other side was the Rabbi Shammai who taught that the only valid reason for divorce was that of adultery. In Matthew 19:1-12 Christ is called upon by the Pharisees to address this issue.²⁵ His response in verses 4-6 in which he quotes Genesis 1:27 and 3:24 shows that God considers the marriage bond to be unbreakable for any cause except fornication. God's original intent and purpose was that marriage be an eternal covenant, broken only by the death of one of the spouses. This verse, which is essentially a paraphrase of Jesus' words in Matthew 19 and Moses words in Genesis 1:27 and 3:24, reinforces the fact that as far as God is concerned the husband is to have an unbreakable love for his wife.

The Summation For Husbands and Wives - Ephesians 5:32-33

This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

Paul sums up this section on the roles and responsibilities of husbands and wives by noting that the relationship of the husband to the wife is like that of Christ to the Church. As husbands, we should look to the way Christ cares for his Church as a model of how we are to care for our wives. As wives, we should look to the way the Church responds to Christ as a model of how we are to respond to our husbands.

Paul's summary statement for the husband is that he love his wife, sacrificially, caringly, eternally, and purely. This is not an option for him, but is a command. When he faithfully carries out the command, the emotions will follow later.

Paul's summary statement for the wife is that she reverence her husband. The word for reverence, *phobatai*, is most often translated "fear." The idea here is not that the wife should be afraid of her husband, but that she should reverently respect him as her head in the marriage relationship just as she submits to Christ.

²⁵ John MacArthur, *Matthew 16-23*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), pp. 159-76.