

Ephesians Chapter 5

Walk in Love (1-14)

Ephesians 5:1 Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.

Ephesians 5:2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

be imitators¹ of God.... An imitator is a mimic and in some sense that is what we are being asked to do, mimic God or some aspect of His behavior. What aspect? The answer is in 4:32, the new chapter and paragraph header diverted our attention from it. However, the word **Therefore** in 5:1 alerts us to it. “**Therefore**” pointed us back to: “forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. Therefore....” That is what we are to imitate in God—forgiveness.

In the famed Lord’s Prayer, we read:

“And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.” (Matthew 6:12, NKJV)

“Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.” (Matthew 18:21–22, NKJV)

Forgiveness concludes the material in chapter 4, if we don’t imitate God in forgiveness then we defy God. Be imitators not defiers.

walk in love.... With this, Paul continues to address their walk, their lifestyle, the habits of their lives; this is now the fifth time Paul has addressed our walk.

“in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,” (Ephesians 2:2, NKJV)

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10, NKJV)

“to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,” (Ephesians 4:1, NKJV)

“you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, [but] in true righteousness and holiness.” (Ephesians 4:17, NKJV)

“And walk in love.” (Ephesians 5:2, NKJV)

There will follow two more calls to walk as a Christian.

“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8, NKJV)

¹ imitators μιμητής “one who imitates someone else—‘imitator, one who does what others do. Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 508.

“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,” (Ephesians 5:15, NKJV)

What it boils down to is “walking in love is the way in which one imitates God.”² What does walk in love look like?

as Christ also has loved us.... The command to “*be imitators of God*” in 5:1 is now illustrated in Jesus Christ who has “*loved us and given Himself for us.*” Paul means for us to give of ourselves to others as well.

and given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

“How Christ loved us is amplified in the following clause, which speaks of his sacrificial death on the cross: he *gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.* The verb ‘gave over,’ together with the reflexive pronoun ‘himself,’ indicates that *Christ took the initiative in handing himself over to death.* He went to the cross as the *willing* victim, and this he did on behalf of believers....”³

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The altar of incense was a part of the worship in the Temple. Jesus took the place of this and all offerings in His sacrifice in the New Testament. He is an **offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.** His death is how he expressed his love. To love is to give; a life that does not give is a life that does not love.

The sacrifice of Christ would be a “sweet-smelling aroma” to God. The things mentioned next would be a stench in the nostrils of God.

Ephesians 5:3 But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints;

But the Christian walk forbids some behaviors. Paul now moves from “the topic of self-sacrificial love to that of self-indulgent sensuality.”⁴ Sexual sins will now dominate in the vices mentioned in the verses to follow.

fornication⁵.... “The term denotes any kind of *illegitimate* sexual intercourse, especially adultery and sexual relations with prostitutes.”⁶

² Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 312.

³ Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 354–355.

⁴ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 321.

⁵ *fornication πορνεία* “to engage in sexual immorality of any kind....” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 770.

⁶ Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 359.

all uncleanness⁷.... "...the expression 'every kind of' [all] points not only to sexual impurity but to much more besides..."⁸ The is a catch-all phrase to make the point that nothing is left out when it comes to sex outside of marriage.

"who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." (Ephesians 4:19, NKJV)

covetousness⁹.... Covetousness "should also be taken as the sort of unrestrained sexual greed whereby a person assumes that others exist for his or her own gratification."¹⁰

"...you shall not covet your neighbor's wife...." (Exodus 20:17, NKJV)

let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints.... "Thinking and talking about sexual sins 'creates an atmosphere in which they are tolerated, and which can ... even promote their practice'."¹¹ We can become numbed to immorality by talk and by movies and TV. But, is it **fitting**, is it appropriate?

Ephesians 5:4 neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

Paul follows these last three behaviors by focusing on the talk about these behaviors.

filthiness¹².... "It has the sense of that which is shameful, disgraceful, and base."¹³ Based on the words that will follow, we can see that this term refers especially to filthiness in *speaking*.

nor foolish talking¹⁴.... This again refers to talk about sex, it is "foolish talk," and it "detracts from the issues of faith and does not lend to edifying discussion."¹⁵

⁷ *uncleanness ἀκαθαρσία* "the state of moral impurity, especially in relationship to sexual sin—'impurity, immorality, filthiness.'" Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 769.

⁸ Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 359.

⁹ *covetousness πλεονεξία* "a strong desire to acquire more and more material possessions or to possess more things than other people have, all irrespective of need—'greed, avarice, covetousness.'" Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 290–291.

¹⁰ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 322.

¹¹ Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 360.

¹² *filthiness αἰσχρότης* "Impropriety, a summarizing improper conduct whether in action or word or even thought and intent; indecorum of any kind; conduct which when exposed by the light makes the person ashamed of himself; ugly, shameful conduct of any kind; conduct which is contrary to a person who follows after God..." Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

¹³ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.*, vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 101.

¹⁴ *foolish talking μωρολογία* "talk which is both foolish and stupid..." Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 431.

¹⁵ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.*, vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 101.

nor coarse jesting¹⁶.... "...the coarse joking prohibited may well involve the use of suggestive language and double entendres¹⁷."¹⁸

which are not fitting¹⁹.... Speech that does not reach up to the standard expected of a Christian.

"What he is really attempting to discourage is sexual sin becoming the object of interest in conversation."²⁰ *"All three refer to a dirty mind expressing itself in dirty conversation."*²¹

but rather giving of thanks. As the mouth can be used for improper speech, so it can be used for proper speech. **Giving of thanks** represents one of several means for the put-on to the prior put-off. "Whereas sexual impurity and covetousness both express self-centered acquisitiveness, thanksgiving is the exact opposite, *and so the antidote required*...."²²

There are of course other ways to use the mouth positively as well.

"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things." (Philippians 4:8, NKJV)

Meditate represents mental talk.

Ephesians 5:5 For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

The thing about most of these Ephesians is that all these sins were at one time common to their lives. However, they have now repented of them and their life is now in Christ. So, this is not meant in the *absolute sense* but the sense that these are not a "walk" or a lifestyle of a believer. But these are the normal lifestyle behaviors of one who is not a Christian.

¹⁶ *coarse jesting* εὐτραπέλια "coarse joking involving vulgar expressions and indecent content—'vulgar speech, indecent talk.'" Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 392.

¹⁷ *double entendres* "a word or expression capable of two interpretations with one usually risqué." <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/double%20entendre>

¹⁸ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 323.

¹⁹ *fitting* ἀνήκω "To come up, come to, reach to, pertain, belong to. ... it belongs, it is fit, proper, becoming...." Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

²⁰ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 322.

²¹ John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 192.

²² John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 192.

For this you know or be certain of this.... The construction of this phrase in the Greek language is more certain than the English phrase; there is a certainty in the knowing.

“There follows this solemn warning about the dire consequences for those who practice the vices listed in v 3. This time there is the additional thought that the person who is *characterized* by unrestrained sexual greed is, in fact, an idolater....”²³ Some people never stop thinking and talking about sex. These are idolaters.

Idolatry was commonly practiced in the context of Temple prostitution and was a normal part of pagan idolatry. “...since the Greek goddess Artemis, ‘Diana of the Ephesians,’ was regarded as a fertility goddess, sexual orgies were regularly associated with her worship.”²⁴ *This was the culture of all of Asia Minor; Paul insists that this behavior be put off and put out of their lives.* He did not care that “everybody is doing it.” Neither should we.

has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. To his pleading, Paul now adds the certainty of judgment on those who defy the holiness of Godly living. He is saying that these sexual idolaters are lost, they are unbelievers. They do not worship the only true God.

Earlier we read of our assurance of salvation in God’s election.

“who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” (Ephesians 1:14, NKJV)

Now Paul is warning the Ephesians, and us, of the possibility of failure and damnation.

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.” (1 Corinthians 6:9–10, NKJV)

“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” (Galatians 5:19–21, NKJV)

And now:

“For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.” (Ephesians 5:5, NKJV)

“The apostle is not asserting that the believer who ever falls into these sins is automatically excluded from God’s kingdom. Rather, what is envisaged here is the person who has given himself or herself up without shame or repentance to this way of

²³ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 324.

²⁴ John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 192.

life.”²⁵ However, we are aware that “those who fall into such sins through weakness, but afterwards repent in shame and humility, there is forgiveness. The immoral or impure person envisaged here is one who has given himself up without shame or penitence (repentance) to this way of life, *one who is covetous* in the sense already defined, namely sexually greedy (4:19; 5:3), ... *is*, Paul adds in parenthesis, *an idolater*. Such people, whose lust has become *an idolatrous obsession*, will have *no share* in the perfect kingdom of God.”²⁶

This teaching is not a new message. Considering the security of the elect in the light of this message we can conclude that the church, like the nation of Israel, is a mixed multitude—some saved, some lost.

Ephesians 5:6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

“The readers are not to be led astray by anyone who asserts that there will be no judgment on sin. The words of such a person are empty, devoid of truth....”²⁷ “In our day there are many deceivers in the world, and even in the church. They teach that God is too kind to condemn everybody and that everybody will get to heaven in the end, irrespective of their behavior on earth. But their words are empty and their teaching deceitful. Universalism (*i.e.*, universal final salvation) is a lie.”²⁸ There are others that think they magnify the grace of God by saying God can be savior but not Lord. As long as you’ve walked that aisle and prayed that prayer, you’re in like Flint; don’t worry about obedience. This passage speaks to the contrary.

In our age, people who are not sexually immoral are the objects of vicious attacks by those that are. The filthy call them haters for they speak the words of God in rejecting these sins. There is no question that we hate, the question is what do we hate?

“To the angel of the church of Ephesus write.... “But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.” (Revelation 2:1, 6, NKJV)

Jesus hates sin and so we must as well. The world loves sin, we cannot compromise. To the message of sin, you commonly hear: “Oh, you just have a sexual hang-up.” You’re the pervert, not me.” Mocking and belittling insults are common for defending sin and attacking those committed to righteous behavior.

Those that stand apart in purity are *threats to their behavior* suggesting that they are evil, and that judgment will follow. They are right ***for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience [5:6]***. “God’s wrath, his holy anger against sin and the judgment that results from it, is real, and it is coming on the disobedient.”²⁹

²⁵ Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 363.

²⁶ John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 197.

²⁷ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 325.

²⁸ John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 197.

²⁹ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 325.

“In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.” (1 Peter 4:4, NKJV)

Ephesians 5:7 Therefore do not be partakers with them.

do not be partakers.... “The context here in Ephesians makes clear that what is involved is not a general distancing from all aspects of life in the Gentile world but in particular a separation from its immoral aspects. The readers are not to become partners with disobedient Gentiles in their sins and thereby also in the judgment that will come on them.”³⁰

with them. “It is not possible for the readers to be sharers with Jewish Christians in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel (cf. 3:6) and at the same time to be sharers with immoral Gentiles....”³¹

“Do not be deceived: “Evil company corrupts good habits.”” (1 Corinthians 15:33, NKJV)

Good company tends to result in good behavior; filthy company tends to result in filthy behavior.

Take note, “holiness is not a condition into which we *drift*. We are not passive spectators of a sanctification that God works in us. On the contrary, we have purposefully ‘put away’ from us all conduct that is incompatible with our new life in Christ, and have ‘put on’ a lifestyle compatible with it.”³²

Walk as Children of Light

Ephesians 5:8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light

Paul introduces a new term common to Scripture that he now uses to help us in our spiritual commitment. It is the term ***light*** which he will use four times in the next few verses.

once darkness.... Darkness refers to death. Darkness and death were the lifestyle of the Ephesians before Paul brought them the Gospel.

“Once they belonged to the rule of darkness (cf. Col. 1:13), but now because of their new relationship with their Lord they are identified with the realm of light. How contradictory it would be, then, for them to become involved with the immorality of the past. If they are *light*, then let them behave as *children of light*, and this will mean living by values that are *diametrically opposed to those of their surrounding society.*”³³

We see that “It is not their environment or the surroundings in which they and the rest of humanity live that is in view. Rather, they themselves were once *darkness*, but now

³⁰ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 326.

³¹ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 326.

³² John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 193.

³³ Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 366.

they are *light in the Lord*. Those ruled by the dominion of *darkness* or *light* represent that dominion in their own persons. So, when they were converted, it was their lives, not their surroundings, that were changed from darkness to light.³⁴

Our culture believes that our only salvation is found in the hope of the education of our brain and the rehabilitation of our environment. These are the results of salvation, not the cause of it. At one time the brain and environment were without defect. That did not stop them from sinning.

Walk as children of light.... “What will this mean in practice? It will mean a life shining with *all that is good and right and true*, [5:9] for these things are *the fruit of light....*”³⁵

“Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” (John 8:12, NKJV)

Ephesians 5:9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth),

Verse 9 is a parenthesis.

for the fruit of the Spirit is in all.... Not in all people, but in all goodness. There is no pause after the word “all.” The meaning is all goodness, all righteousness, and all truth.

Verse 9 explains what “*walk as children of light*” means in verse 8. Such a walk looks like goodness, righteousness, and truth. Other fruits of the Spirit are:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,” (Galatians 5:22, NKJV)

These words stand in stark contrast with the unfruitful works of darkness found in verse 3-4 above:

“But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.” (Ephesians 5:3–4, NKJV)

goodness³⁶.... This word addresses behavior, which is beneficial to others; our goodness works to the advantage neighbors. It is a giving spirit that cares for other people.

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10, NKJV)

“that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God,” (Colossians 1:10, NKJV)

³⁴ Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 367.

³⁵ John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 199.

³⁶ *goodness* ἀγαθωσύνη a “positive moral quality characterized esp. by interest in the welfare of others....” William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 4.

righteousness.... Righteousness involves doing what is right in relation to both God and humanity.”³⁷ “...it means conformity to law....”³⁸—God’s law. Christians are law keepers not lawbreakers.

and truth³⁹.... One aspect of truth is honesty, as in:

“Therefore, putting away lying, “Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,” for we are members of one another.” (Ephesians 4:25, NKJV)

Another aspect of truth, especially in our day, is the objective fact of truth. With Paul, there is no subjective “my truth” “your truth.” Truth is objective; one size fits all. The attempt to undermine the meaning of truth in our culture is based on the desire to undermine objective reality. If there is no truth, then all behaviors are of equal value, rightness and morality. And, if there is no objective truth, then there is no one who is “*the way, the truth, and the life* (John 14:6, NKJV).

Paul does not define the word “truth” but assumes it is self-evident; it is what is objectively true—everywhere, at all times and for all people.

Paul’s use of **for the fruit of the Spirit** here should be compared with Galatians.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22–23, NKJV)

These fruits in Ephesians are but a summary and as Galatians (above) clarifies there are many more of these fruits that should be in our lives.

Ephesians 5:10 [Walk as children of light, v8] finding out [or discovering] what is acceptable to the Lord.

Verse 9 was a parenthesis. We will now get back to the point of verse 8.

finding out [or discovering]⁴⁰ What Paul is addressing is something like case law versus statutory law. Statutory law is revealed by divine revelation, case law is the application of statutory law and is unique real word situations.

“If the readers’ motivation is to please their Lord, then living as children of light will involve exercising a responsible freedom and developing an intuitive sense about how

³⁷ *righteousness* δικαιοσύνη “Righteousness fulfills ... God’s claims; and in the case of the nonbeliever, the claims of that higher authority which a person adopts as his own standard. *Dikaíosúnē*, righteousness, is thus conformity to the claims of higher authority Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

³⁸ Charles Hodge, *Ephesians*, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 171.

³⁹ *truth* ἀλήθεια “Truth, reality; the unveiled reality lying at the basis of and agreeing with an appearance; the manifested, the veritable essence of matter.” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

⁴⁰ *finding out [or discovering]* δοκιμάζω “to regard something as genuine or worthy on the basis of testing—to judge to be genuine, to judge as good, to approve.” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 363.

to act in a given situation.”⁴¹ The Bible addresses some behaviors specifically, but most behaviors are addressed in principles derived from scripture.

So, how do you *find out* or *discover* what is acceptable to God? Is the Christian life a trial by error process?

One does not need to *find out* or *discover* what the Bible already says. “...his moral will is revealed in specific commands, which do not need to be tested...”⁴² That has already been “found out” in God’s direct revelation.

“However, where specific situations in life are not directly addressed in the Scriptures, believers need to look for principles from the Scriptures whereby they might be able to make a choice or choices that will please the Lord.”⁴³ In doing this, they must *find out* or *discover* what is acceptable to the Lord—from His word.

Particularly close to our text is Romans 12:2.

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove [find out, discover] what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” (Romans 12:2, NKJV)

Our minds are fallen in Adam and corrupted by sin. The mind is transformed by the Spirit which then points us to the Word. “...as believers examine the Scriptures; they also need the enlightenment and enablement of the Holy Spirit to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.”⁴⁴

“Test all things; hold fast what is good.” (1 Thessalonians 5:21, NKJV)

Test is another good translation for this word. Having tested life with God’s word (and thereby *discovered* truth), reject error and *hold fast to what is good.*

what is acceptable⁴⁵ to the Lord. In our walk, we seek to discover what is pleasing to God.

Ephesians 5:11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.

fellowship.... This word means, “Those who have things in common, who are congenial, who have the same views, feelings, and interests, and who therefore delight

⁴¹ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 329.

⁴² Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.*, vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 104.

⁴³ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.*, vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 104.

⁴⁴ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.*, vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 104.

⁴⁵ *acceptable* εὐάρεστος, “pertaining to that which causes someone to be pleased—‘pleasing to, pleasingly.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 299.

in each other's company, are said to be in fellowship."⁴⁶ It is this fellowship that we cannot have....

with the unfruitful works of darkness.... "to have fellowship with the **deeds of darkness** is to delight in them and to participate in them. All such association is forbidden as inconsistent with the character of the **children of light**."⁴⁷

but rather expose⁴⁸ them. "Here **expose** is not simply to reprove in the sense of admonishing or rebuking. It also means to convince by evidence."⁴⁹ It is not a self-righteous rebuke; it is an apologetic. To engage the person graciously and thoughtfully is one way to expose. However, that is not always possible. Another way is to live like a believer. The contrast with **the unfruitful works of darkness** is an **expose** and a rebuke. As believers "refuse to join in evil actions and display a different quality of life, they cast their illuminating beam into the dark recesses of the surrounding society and will invariably show up its immoral practices for what they are."⁵⁰

Ephesians 5:12 For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.

shameful⁵¹.... "The deeds of darkness are so abhorrent that it is shameful even to speak of them. ... Their activities are not even to be mentioned...."⁵²

Of course, what we do today is teach them to our children in grammar school. That shows the spirit of evil in our hearts and our hatred of God and His word. Having fallen in Adam, whatever the Bible says to do, we will go out of our way to do just the opposite.

Ephesians 5:13 But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.

exposed⁵³.... To shame, to disgrace.

If there is no light, then nothing is made visible (manifest). So, although "truth cannot regenerate or impart the principle of spiritual life; ... it is essential to all holy exercises. And wherever the truth penetrates, it dissipates the clouds of error and brings everything to view, so that when spiritually discerned it produces its proper effect on the soul. Thus truth is essential; it is the duty of Christians to bring it to bear on all those

⁴⁶ Charles Hodge, *Ephesians*, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 173.

⁴⁷ Charles Hodge, *Ephesians*, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 173.

⁴⁸ *expose* ἐλέγχω "to convict, to prove one in the wrong and thus to shame him...." Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

⁴⁹ Charles Hodge, *Ephesians*, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 173.

⁵⁰ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 330.

⁵¹ *shameful* αἰσχρὸς "Indecent, indecorous, dishonorable. It refers to the inappropriate conduct...." Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

⁵² Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 330.

⁵³ *exposed* ἐλέγχω "To shame, disgrace.... In the NT, to convict, to prove one in the wrong and thus to shame him." Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

who are ignorant and on all the works of darkness.”⁵⁴ Keeping truth behind the doors of our church or home is of no value to a desperate world dead in sin.

whatever makes manifest is light. Christians make sin visible. Like the moon to the sun, Christians are light to a dark world.

Ephesians 5:14 Therefore He says:
“Awake, you who sleep,
Arise from the dead,
And Christ will give you light.”

Three passages in Isaiah suggest the material in our verse.

“Your dead shall live;
Together with my **dead** body they shall **arise**.
Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust;
For your dew is like the dew of herbs,
And the earth shall cast out the **dead**.” (Isaiah 26:19, NKJV)

“**Arise**, shine;
For your **light** has come!
And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you.” (Isaiah 60:1, NKJV)

“The people who walked in darkness
Have seen a great **light**;
Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of **death**,
Upon them a **light** has shined.” (Isaiah 9:2, NKJV)

The Ephesians text does not ascribe the quote to any biblical writer or passage. However, there are words here that are common to Isaiah and do show a similarity with our passage.

And how does it relate to Ephesians? “In both, there is the call to those who are asleep or **dead** to **rise** and to receive the **light**, and there is the promise that Jehovah, Lord, or **Christ** (equivalent terms in the mind of the apostle) would give them **light**.”⁵⁵

So, this passage is a promise addressing 5:8-14. We were dead in darkness; we are now called to the light. In Christ we are promised success—*Christ will give you light!*

Our prior condition is “graphically described in terms of sleep, death and darkness, from all of which Christ rescues us. Conversion is nothing less than awaking out of sleep, rising from death and being brought out of darkness into the light of Christ.”⁵⁶

Walk in Wisdom

Ephesians 5:15 See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,

⁵⁴ Charles Hodge, *Ephesians*, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 175.

⁵⁵ Charles Hodge, *Ephesians*, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 175–176.

⁵⁶ John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 201.

then [οὕτως] commonly translated, **therefore**. As such, the word looks back to the previous paragraph. *Christ will give you light, [5:14], therefore walk circumspectly....* Always try to connect the therefore with the previous material in order to understand the flow of meaning in a passage.

walk.... “His word for to ‘behave’ throughout the letter has been a Hebrew concept, to ‘walk’.”⁵⁷ This word addresses our lifestyle. We are to behave....

circumspectly⁵⁸.... Or “diligently, accurately, exactly....”⁵⁹ Or walk “in strict conformity to a norm or standard, involving both detail and completeness.” That “norm or standard” would be the word of God and without that word, there is no Christian walk. Therefore, that walk would be a careful, deliberate, and thoughtful obedience to the word of God.

not as fools but as wise.... But how do you walk as wise and not as fools? Again, “circumspectly.” In “strict conformity to a norm or standard, involving both detail and completeness.” The wise do this, fools do not. The behavior of the wise is thoughtful and careful, fools show little interest for either thought or care; they react to the desires of the flesh.

“...wisdom is a combination of theoretical and practical knowledge, which results in skillful living....”⁶⁰ The skillful living illustrates itself in decision making and behaviors. The fool looks back and says, “I wish I hadn’t said or done that.” The wise decides not to say and do that ahead of time. [Daniel 1:8]. That is skillful living. That is what we are called to.

Ephesians 5:16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

redeeming⁶¹.... To redeem literally means to purchase. However, here this verse is used as an idiom and is understood in a non-literal sense; to urgently make the best use of time possible.

time.... “So καιρός [time] here refers to time in the sense of the opportunities it offers, each of which is to be capitalized upon, to be exploited....”⁶²

There is one other possibility, this phrase may have an eschatological emphasis that focuses on the soon coming of Jesus in judgment on Israel and with that the persecuting role of Rome upon the Church. “...the force would be that believers are

⁵⁷ John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 201.

⁵⁸ *circumspectly* ἀκριβῶς “pertaining to strict conformity to a norm or standard, involving both detail and completeness—‘accurate, accurately, strict, strictly.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 673.

⁵⁹ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

⁶⁰ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.*, vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 107.

⁶¹ *redeeming* ἐξαγοράζομαι “(an idiom, literally ‘to redeem the time’) to do something with intensity and urgency (used absolutely)—‘to work urgently, to redeem the time.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 662.

⁶² Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 342.

living in the last days....”⁶³ That does not mean the end of the world but the end of the Jewish world and the end of a period of peace with Rome. And if that is the case, then they need to be productive in what years they have before the hammer falls for “*the days are evil.*” V16.

All the writers of the New Testament are clearly looking for something big to happen soon—in the 1st century.

“*Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends (τέλος) of the ages have come.*” (1 Corinthians 10:11, NKJV)

“*Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand;*” (Philippians 4:5, ESV)

“*The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.*” (Romans 13:12, ESV)

“*The end (τέλος) of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.*” (1 Peter 4:7, ESV)

“*not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*” (Hebrews 10:25, ESV)

“*For, “Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay;”*” (Hebrews 10:37, ESV)

“*Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.*” (1 John 2:18, ESV)

“*You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.*” (James 5:8–9, ESV)

“*not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.*” (2 Thessalonians 2:2, ESV)

Paul may be speaking about **redeeming the time** with this in mind.

Ephesians 5:17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Therefore.... “because the days are evil. ***Therefore*** do not be unwise....” V16-17.

⁶³ Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 381.

unwise or **thoughtless**.... Or “foolish, senseless, unwise.”⁶⁴ Perhaps *thoughtless* is a good translation here, especially in the light of the next word. The Greek word used has the word “mind” as a part of its meaning so the meaning could be “mindless.”

“A person who is “thoughtless” or “mindless” is one who thinks carelessly and as a result lacks understanding or discernment in practical living.”⁶⁵ He is foolish, unwise.

understand⁶⁶ or **thoughtful**.... “to employ one’s capacity for understanding and thus to arrive at insight—‘to understand, to comprehend, to perceive, to have insight into.’”⁶⁷ Or perhaps, *thoughtful*.

will⁶⁸ **of the Lord**.... “that which is desired or wished for—‘wish, desire.’” The “will of the Lord” would be addressing verse 16 “redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” What is God’s will in the behavior of the lives of the Ephesians? How should they live during these “last days?”

To some degree, the **will of the Lord** is a life pursuit in the understanding of God. That is a product of walking **circumspectly**. Or walking “in strict conformity to a norm or standard, involving both detail and completeness.”

And how would you **understand what the will of the Lord is**? One way would be....

Ephesians 5:18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,

do not be drunk.... This is what Paul meant when he just said, **not as fools but as wise** [5:15]. “This is an example of folly, a lack of sense, especially inconsistent with the intelligence of the true believer.”⁶⁹

dissipation,⁷⁰ **debauchery**, or **ruination**.... If your life was ruined by drinking, then you would have no clue or even interest in pursuing “the will of the Lord” [5:17]. “The shift from the notion of drunkenness to that of being filled with the Spirit is not as abrupt as it

⁶⁴ *unwise* ἄφρων “pertaining to not employing one’s understanding, particularly in practical matters—‘foolish, senseless, unwise.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 386.

⁶⁵ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon*, vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 107.

⁶⁶ *understand* συνίημι “The comprehending activity of the mind entails the assembling of individual facts into an organized whole, as collecting the pieces of a puzzle and putting them together. The mind grasps concepts and sees the proper relationship between them. Such understanding includes the moral and religious awareness of man’s heart....” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

⁶⁷ *understand* συνίημι “to employ one’s capacity for understanding and thus to arrive at insight—‘to understand, to comprehend, to perceive, to have insight into.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 379.

⁶⁸ *will* θέλημα “that which is desired or wished for—‘wish, desire.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 287.

⁶⁹ Charles Hodge, *Ephesians*, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 178.

⁷⁰ *dissipation* ἀσωτία “...behavior which shows lack of concern or thought for the consequences of an action—‘senseless deeds, reckless deeds, recklessness.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 752.

may appear at first sight. The former represents folly; the latter is the prerequisite for wisdom. Both involve the self coming under the control of an external power, and the states of alcoholic and of religious intoxication were often compared.”⁷¹

It is probable that drunkenness was a common behavior with the people Asian Minor as it is common to most people in the world today. In Adam, they live as fools—through their drunkenness; but now, they are now called to live in the Spirit, to live wisely. “Drunkenness was all too common in the pagan world and cautions in the NT show that it presented a serious temptation to Christians.”⁷²

Or is this addressing a larger issue in the Ephesian church something like what Paul found in the Corinthian church, possible what occurred in their agape feast which was then followed by the Lord’s Supper.

“For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk.” (1 Corinthians 11:21, NKJV)

Verses 5:19-20 goes on to describe a worship scene and that adds support to the idea of the Lord’s Supper may be a part of this scene. But Paul never actually says this.

filled.... “The present imperative probably indicates the repeated action of filling by the Spirit.”⁷³ Some people call this a “second blessing” but it is not a one-time revival meeting experience but a lifetime experience.

filled with.... What does the word “with” [ἐν] mean here? It is the translation of a Greek preposition meaning: “In, on, at, by any place or thing, with the primary idea of rest.”⁷⁴

So, the question is, are we filled by means of or are we filled with [instrumental]? The preposition can mean either. However, even using the word *with*, this translation is not necessarily a conviction by the translator that a person is filled with the Holy Spirit and not by the Holy Spirit. A hole can be filled with a bulldozer either by pushing dirt into the hole or by parking the bulldozer in the hole. Which is it?

the Spirit.... So, filled *with* the Spirit or filled **by means** of the Spirit becomes the question. Most major translations use the word **with** here. However, the Holman Christian Standard Bible translates this preposition as **by**. I’m drawn to this translation.

“And don’t get drunk with wine, which leads to reckless actions, but be filled by the Spirit.” (Ephesians 5:18, HCSB)

“There is much needed corrective doctrinal instruction in the grammatical cases which this passive verb governs: the Dative case designates the filler, here, the Holy Spirit, necessitating an improvement in the English rendering to show we are filled not with but

⁷¹ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 344.

⁷² A. Skevington Wood, “Ephesians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 72.

⁷³ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.*, vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 108.

⁷⁴ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

BY the Spirit; the Genitive case denotes what the vessel is filled with. Note that the Holy Spirit is never said to fill us with Himself, but with gifts specified in the immediate context; here, gifts other than wine, gifts specified by the participles in the following verses, speaking (in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs), singing, giving thanks, and submitting. The filling of the Holy Spirit is always a reference to a filling with His gifts for service. He does not fill us with Himself, but with His gifts. Attention to these details will show how greatly mistaken are the popular conceptions of the Holy Spirit and His work. These mistaken conceptions, though taught with great sincerity, frequently supported by an appeal to misconstrued or misinterpreted experience, are in great error. Such mistaken notions lack Biblical authority because they are not based upon an accurate understanding of Scripture....”⁷⁵

There are “three ministries of the Spirit —**sealing** [Eph 1:13, 4:30], **indwelling** [2 Timothy 1:14; Romans 8:9, 11, I Corinthians 3:16] and **baptism** [Matthew 3:11] [which] are bestowed on every believer at the time of salvation.”⁷⁶ Filled with the Spirit is common in Scripture [see Acts 6:3 & 5, Acts 2:4, Luke 4:1]. Our passage differs by the use of the *dative* which typically address the *means* of filling, *not the content*. It appears that Paul is saying is that we are filled by the Holy Spirit and what we are filled with are: “speaking” v19, “singing and making melody” v19, “giving thanks” v20, and “submitting” v21. But even if we are filled with the Holy Spirit, the result is somewhat the same, the result is still “speaking” v19, “singing and making melody” v19, “giving thanks” v20, and “submitting” v21.

These terms represent the behavior of the believer after he has been filled *with* or *by* the Holy Spirit. Perhaps we could say that a person filled by the Holy Spirit *acts* this way, one who is not filled by the Holy Spirit, does not *act* this way. That suggests the question, do you *act* this way?

Ephesians 5:19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,

Verses 19-21 follow “be filled with the Spirit” without a break. It is in these verses that we learn what Paul wants us to be filled with. “Paul then related four resultant characteristics of those filled with [by] the Spirit (5:19–21). The characteristics are delineated by four participles of result....”⁷⁷

“The first is communication with one another by means of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (5:19a).”⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Jerome H. Smith, *The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge: The Most Complete Listing of Cross References Available Anywhere- Every Verse, Every Theme, Every Important Word* (Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson, 1992), 1386.

⁷⁶ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.*, vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 109.

⁷⁷ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.*, vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 109.

⁷⁸ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.*, vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 109.

“The second resultant characteristic of being filled with [by] the Spirit is found in “making music to the Lord in your hearts.”⁷⁹

Ephesians 5:20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

“The third resultant characteristic is giving thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (5:20).”⁸⁰

Christians can speak this way:

“Coarse and foolish talking or crude joking are not suitable, but rather giving thanks.” (Ephesians 5:4, HCSB)

Or they can speak this way:

“speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making music from your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,” (Ephesians 5:19–20, HCSB)

Again, notice Paul’s use of the Trinity in his teachings:

filled with the Spirit v18
to God the Father v20
the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.... v20

Ephesians 5:21 submitting to one another in the fear of God.

“If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.” (John 13:14–15, NKJV)

Following Jesus example:

“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.” (Philippians 2:3, NKJV)

“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another,” (Romans 12:10, NKJV)

This passage is a part of the larger context of 5:15-5:20—“walk circumspectly not as fools but as wise,” and then in 5:18-21 adds behaviors that are a product of the filling by the Holy Spirit: speaking, singing and making melody, giving thanks, and submitting. Verses 5:21 and following fleshes out how the Spirit-filled person submits. A person that does not submit is not Spirit-filled.

Mutual Submission in Specific Relationships (5:22–6:9)

⁷⁹ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.*, vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 109.

⁸⁰ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.*, vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 109.

Col 3:18–4:1; 1 Pet 2:18–3:7; 1 Tim 2:8–15; 1 Tim 6:1–10; Titus 2:1–10

Responsibility of Wives to Submit to their Husbands (5:22–24)

“Now the very notion of submission to authority is out of fashion today. It is totally at variance with contemporary attitudes of permissiveness and freedom. Almost nothing is calculated to arouse more angry protest than talk of ‘subjection.’ Ours is an age of liberation (not least for women, children, and workers), and anything savoring of oppression is deeply resented and strongly resisted.”⁸¹

So how shall we respond to the call to liberation to women, children, and workers? To begin, “...we have to agree that women in many cultures have been exploited, being treated like servants in their own home; that children have often been suppressed and squashed, not least in Victorian England in which they were supposed to be ‘seen and not heard’; and that workers have been unjustly treated, being given inadequate wages and working conditions, and an insufficient share in responsible decision-making, not to mention the appalling injustices and barbarities of slavery and the slave trade.”⁸²

Ephesians 5:22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

The first thing to note here is that this is not a command to the husband to do anything. It is strictly God’s communication to wives. The husband receives his instruction in 5:25.

We see this statement repeated several times in the New Testament.

“*Wives, be submissive to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.*” (Colossians 3:18, HCSB)

“*to be self-controlled, pure, homemakers, kind, and submissive to their husbands, so that God’s message will not be slandered.*” (Titus 2:5, HCSB)

“*In the same way, wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, even if some disobey the Christian message, they may be won over without a message by the way their wives live*” (1 Peter 3:1, HCSB)

“*For in the past, the holy women who put their hope in God also beautified themselves in this way, submitting to their own husbands,*” (1 Peter 3:5, HCSB)

submit⁸³ The grammatical form of this Greek word is important; it is: present, middle, imperative.

Present Tense: “The verb tense where the writer portrays an action *in process* or a state of being with no assessment of the action’s completion.”⁸⁴

⁸¹ John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 215.

⁸² John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 216.

⁸³ *submit* ὑποτάσσω “to bring something under the firm control of someone—to subject to, to bring under control.” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 475.

⁸⁴ Michael S. Heiser and Vincent M. Setterholm, *Glossary of Morpho-Syntactic Database Terminology* (Lexham Press, 2013; 2013).

Middle Voice: “The grammatical voice that signifies that the subject of the verb is being affected by its own action or is acting upon itself.”⁸⁵

Imperative Mood: “The mood that normally expresses a command, intention, exhortation, or polite request. The imperative mood is, therefore, not an expression of reality but possibility and volition.”⁸⁶

Returning to the *Voice*, there are three in Greek, active, middle, and passive. In the *active*, the person does something to another. In the *passive*, the action is received from another. In the *middle*, the speaker does something to himself.

The best I can tell from all this is that Paul is asking wives to submit to their husbands voluntarily. And there is nothing about this passage that suggests that husbands are instructed to “get your wife in submission,” a statement not at all uncommon in fundamentalists circles.

as to the Lord. This submission is “part and parcel of the way that she serves the Lord Jesus...”⁸⁷ To be in submission to one is to be in submission to the other. There is no option that allows her to be in submission to “the Lord” but not her husband. If not in submission to her husband, then not in submission to the Lord.

You will often hear 5:22 discussed in light of the order of creation, Adam was created first and then Eve and reversed in the order of the fall, Eve sinned first then Adam. Both are illustrated in 1 Timothy.

“Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.” (1 Timothy 2:11–14, NKJV)

“Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says.” (1 Corinthians 14:34, NKJV)

In 1 Timothy, the first statement deals with creation and the life of Adam and Eve in a sinless world. The verse implies an equality of persons with submission of missions. The second statement deals with our fall and vaguely suggest a “reason” for the submission of this passage—Eve’s priority in sinning.

However, “it is mainly on these facts of creation that Paul bases his case for the husband’s headship...”⁸⁸ Although the fall is mentioned, the relationship between husband and wife was in place before that event.

“For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man.” (1 Corinthians 11:8–9, NKJV)

⁸⁵ Michael S. Heiser and Vincent M. Setterholm, *Glossary of Morpho-Syntactic Database Terminology* (Lexham Press, 2013; 2013).

⁸⁶ Michael S. Heiser and Vincent M. Setterholm, *Glossary of Morpho-Syntactic Database Terminology* (Lexham Press, 2013; 2013).

⁸⁷ Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 412.

⁸⁸ John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 221.

But the analogy that I would like to suggest is the Trinity. Each member of the Trinity is God, and none is inferior to another. “All three persons of God are qualitatively equal (4:4–6; Matt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14; 1 Pet 1:2; cf. also John 13:16; 17:21), but there is also the subordination of the Son to the Father (Matt 10:40; 26:39, 42; John 8:29, 42; 12:49), Holy Spirit to the Father (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13–15), and the Holy Spirit to the Son (John 16:7; cf. 14:26; 15:26). Thus, lines of authority do not imply qualitative inequity.”⁸⁹

The subordination of the Son to the Father and the Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son do not imply the inferiority of one to another. The separate functions of the members of the Trinity are sometimes called an economy of grace.

“...the Son is concerned with the Holy Spirit in the conviction of sinners, and in bringing them, through regeneration and sanctification, into the full enjoyment of the salvation provided (see Holy Spirit), his primary work is rather the provision itself on which, as a divine foundation, this subsequent work of spiritual restoration must be based. The Father creates, preserves, governs, plans, elects, as introductory; the Spirit enlightens, educates, sanctifies, and completes the saving process in the individual soul; the Son, acting as intermediate, represents, reveals, instructs, atones for sin, placates law, and lays a foundation in justice, whereby, under an economy of grace, everyone who believes in him, the Father and the Spirit concurring, may be saved.”⁹⁰

It appears to me that the relationship of a husband and wife is much the same; there is a subordination in function with an equality in persons.

Ephesians 5:23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

For the husband is head⁹¹ of the wife.... The word ***head*** refers to “one who is of supreme or pre-eminent status, in view of authority to order or command....”⁹²

as also Christ is head of the church.... “Christ has appointed the same relation to exist between a husband and a wife, as between himself and his church.”⁹³ “The writer’s point is this: the husband’s headship or authority, which the wife is to recognize, is one that is patterned on the unique character of Christ’s headship over the Church, and, as the rest of the passage will make clear, that sort of headship included Christ’s giving his life for the Church.”⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.*, vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 114.

⁹⁰ Samuel Macauley Jackson, ed., *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge: Embracing Biblical, Historical, Doctrinal, and Practical Theology and Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Biography from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (New York; London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1908–1914), 9–10.

⁹¹ *head κεφαλή* “the head, chief, one to whom others are subordinate, e.g., the husband in relation to his wife (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23) insofar as they are one body (Matt. 19:6; Mark 10:8), and one body can have only one head to direct it; of Christ in relation to His Church which is His body....” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

⁹² Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 738.

⁹³ John Calvin and William Pringle, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 317–318.

⁹⁴ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 369–370.

We see this subordination clearly in I Corinthians as well.

“But I want you to know that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of the woman, and God is the head of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 11:3, HCSB)

Of course, in many churches, Christ is not their head. And in many families, the husband is not the head either.

and He is the Savior of the body.... **He** refers to Christ, and the **body** refers to the Church.

“And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” (Ephesians 1:22–23, NKJV)

“but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,” (2 Timothy 1:10, NKJV)

Or is this supposed to be an analogy between husband and wife, whereas the husband is the savior of the body as Christ is to the Church? He is not a spiritual savior but could be conceived as a physical one in the role of protector of the weaker vessel. Verse 5:24, which returns immediately to the person of the church, and Christ suggests that it is Christ who is the savior.

Ephesians 5:24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

just as the church is subject to Christ.... Just how is the church subject to Christ? “The Church’s subordination, then, means looking to its head for his beneficial rule, living by his norms, experiencing his presence and love, receiving from him gifts that will enable growth to maturity, and responding to him in gratitude and awe. It is such attitudes that the wife is being encouraged to develop in relation to her husband.”⁹⁵

“...the Church is depicted as showing to Christ the subordination which, according to 1 Cor 15:28, Christ will show to God....”⁹⁶

“Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.” (1 Corinthians 15:28, NKJV)

in everything.... “...‘in everything’ indicates that the wife is to be subordinate to her husband *in every area of life*. In this sense, it is all-encompassing, and is not, as some have suggested, restricted to sexual matters or some other special sphere of their relationship. ‘No part of her life should be outside of her relationship to her husband and outside of subordination to him.’ Just as the church is to submit to Christ in

⁹⁵ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 372.

⁹⁶ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 372.

everything, so in every sphere, wives are expected to submit to their husbands. The motivation for doing this is a true and godly reverence for Christ (5:21; cf. v. 33).⁹⁷

In everything would include everything to which the husband has a legal and moral claim to address. "...it goes without saying that wives are not to be subordinate in matters that are sinful or contrary to God's commands (cf. Acts 5:29)."⁹⁸

Responsibilities of Husbands to Love Their Wives (5:25-32)

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,

Husbands, love your wives.... Whereby the wife's submission to her husband was in the middle voice, it was voluntary, here, the command to the husband to love is an active voice and an imperative mood, he is given no choice—this he must do.

"Significantly, in addressing their responsibility, Paul used 116 words ... as compared with the 41 words used in his exhortation to wives."⁹⁹ He uses four times the number of words to address the responsibility of the husband. "The amount of space given to the subject and the analogy of Christ's love signifies the unique importance of a husband's responsibility to his wife."¹⁰⁰ What would one make of this?

love¹⁰¹ ***your wives....*** This is called *agape love* and "refers to love irrespective of merit, even to the undeserving. In other words, husbands are to love their wives unconditionally. *Just as the wife's submission is not dependent on the husband's response, likewise, a husband's love is not dependent on the wife's response.*"¹⁰² "This exhortation to husbands to love their wives is unique. It is not found in the Old Testament, rabbinic literature, or in the household codes of the Greco-Roman era."¹⁰³ It has its origin in the New Testament.

But, can you order someone to love as Christ does here? In life, love is both a *choice* and an *obligation*. It is expressed as an obligation here in 5:25. People often talk about the difference between *choice* and *obligation* in love and generally demean obligation. Some will foolishly say things like, "I don't want him/her to love me because they *have* to!" That is not Biblical or reasonable; life cannot be lived on the highest emotional level at all times. In those dark times that are emotionally difficult, it is comforting to know

⁹⁷ Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 417.

⁹⁸ Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 418.

⁹⁹ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.*, vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 115.

¹⁰⁰ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.*, vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 115.

¹⁰¹ *love ἀγαπάω* "To esteem, love, indicating a direction of the will and finding one's joy in something or someone. It differs from *philéō* ... to love, indicating feelings, warm affection...." Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

¹⁰² Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.*, vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 115.

¹⁰³ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.*, vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 115.

that one's mate continues to love because of their commitment to God and you. In those difficult days, you love for no other reason than that God requires you to do so. Obligation is a gracious gift from God.

You also hear people say something like, "We fell out of love, so we got divorced." These are people that made choices to love but made no commitment to love, and, therefore, in the long run, felt no obligation to love. They either took no vows to love "for better or for worse, till death do us part." Or, they simply chose to break those vows when things got tuff. Love without obligation to God and the person loved, *always* fails.

To some degree, you will always fall out of love; it is impossible to always love with that romantic passion at all time. But it is possible to keep your vow to God and the other person and thereby to always love.

just as¹⁰⁴ ***Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her....*** First, note the "***just as***" or manner on how we are to love, just like Christ, *then*, we are given three reasons to love. Each begins with "***that***." *None of these reasons, at first reading, appear to have anything to do with marriage.*

Ephesians 5:26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,

Paul is talking about Christ love for the Church. But this he will soon apply to the husband's love for his wife.

Because he loves the Church, he is committed to sanctify and cleanse the Church. "Christ loved the Church not because it was perfectly lovable, but in order to make it such."¹⁰⁵ There is an implication here; husbands have a spiritual duty to their wives commensurate to how Christ loved the Church—independent of perfection.

sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word.... To sanctify is to make holy. The word *cleanse*, suggest something similar. But what role does the ***washing of water*** play in this? The word ***washing***¹⁰⁶ is only used one other time in the New Testament.

"not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit," (Titus 3:5, NKJV)

There is another passage in which a synonym for washing is used.

"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16, NKJV)

¹⁰⁴ *just as* καθώς "(I) Implying manner. (II) In a causal sense, "as," i.e., even as, inasmuch as...." Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

¹⁰⁵ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 375.

¹⁰⁶ *washing* λουτρόν "A basin or laver for washing, the washing itself. For its possible relativity to baptism in Eph. 5:26, see *báptisma* (908), baptism. It is used metaphorically of the Word of God as the instrument of spiritual cleansing. In Titus 3:5, "the washing [bath] of regeneration" brings to mind the close connection between cleansing from sin and regeneration...." Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

In both these verses commentators have generally, but not universally, considered this a reference to baptism. Baptism *does* ceremonially cleanse us, and the association with regeneration in Titus supports that idea. Note this famous but misunderstood verse in John.

“Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” (John 3:5, NKJV)

“Born of water” refers to the Old Testament ritual baptisms common to Judaism; *“and the Spirit”* refers to the baptism of the Holy Spirit in fully achieving that which water baptism only typified.

“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” (Matthew 3:11, NKJV)

“It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience—concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings [baptisms], and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.” (Hebrews 9:9–10, NKJV)

by the word.... The word, or the preaching of the word, would be the means by which the benefits of the washing or baptism in symbol is brought to bear, the water in and of itself, without the word, doing nothing for us.

“You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.” (John 15:3, NKJV)

In summary, Christ loved the Church in order **that He might sanctify and cleanse her.**

This brings us to a new **that.**

Ephesians 5:27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

Jesus goal is to possess the Church forever. But that cannot take place until the church is made **glorious** and without **spot or wrinkle**. And that explains **the washing of water by the word**. It is the work of the **word** that produces this effect.

“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.” (John 17:17, NKJV)

“For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” (2 Corinthians 11:2, NKJV)

And this brings us to the third and last **that**. This brings us full circle back to **holy and without blemish (blame)** (5:27), which is also found in Ephesians 1:4.

*“just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be **holy and without blame** [same Greek word] before Him in love,” (Ephesians 1:4, NKJV)*

“For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” (2 Corinthians 11:2, NKJV)

This was God’s intention from eternity past.

By this time, we may have lost our place in the discussion on the role of the husband in marriage. So, Paul brings us back to the point in 5:28.

Ephesians 5:28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.

So.... Or “*thus*” or “*in this manner*.” This word [so] refocuses us on verses 25-27, how Jesus loves the Church. So, *thus, in this manner*, husbands ought to love their wives.

ought¹⁰⁷.... This is a word of obligation.

as their own bodies.... “The expression ‘as their own bodies’ instead of ‘as themselves’ (the equivalent in the Leviticus text) is presumably due to the influence of Genesis 2:24....”¹⁰⁸

“This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh.” (Genesis 2:24, HCSB)

One loves their own flesh with much greater intensity than one’s love for his neighbor. This is the kind of love by which husbands must love their wives.

he who loves his wife loves himself. As far as Paul is concerned, that is the nature of marriage. Moderns, including some that would call themselves Christians, would call Paul a sexist and misogynist¹⁰⁹ because he asked women to submit to the headship of their husbands. But this verse puts that thought to rest.

“By way of application, husbands should care for their wives though they may be imperfect.”¹¹⁰ This point is interesting; criticizing a marriage partner to them and to others is common practice by married couples today; criticizing themselves is not as common. And that is the point; treat her as you would treat yourself, don’t slander your mate.

Ephesians 5:29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.

no one ever hated his own flesh.... Paul is not addressing the mentally disturbed who cut themselves or commit suicide. He is addressing the mass of mankind that evidence reasonable degrees of common sense.

¹⁰⁷ *ought* ὀφείλω: to be obligatory in view of some moral or legal requirement—‘ought, to be under obligation.’ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 670.

¹⁰⁸ Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 427.

¹⁰⁹ Misogyny is the hatred of, contempt for, or prejudice against women or girls. Misogyny can be manifested in numerous ways, including social exclusion, sex discrimination, hostility, androcentrism, patriarchy, male privilege, belittling of women, violence against women, and sexual objectification.

¹¹⁰ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.*, vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 118.

but nourishes and cherishes it.... We spend a great deal of time and money on clothes, jewelry, cosmetics, and food all in the effort to **nourishes and cherishes** our bodies.

just as the Lord does the church. In some sense, Jesus does this for the Church as well. “He gave himself up for the church in order to sanctify it (5:25, 26), and he constantly provides for its nourishment and growth (4:11–16). Let each husband, then, follow Christ’s example and be wholehearted in loving and tenderly caring for his wife.”¹¹¹

Ephesians 5:30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.

For¹¹².... What follows the word is the *reason* for what came before. That reason is:

For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. The word “members” is interesting. “It is never used of a member of an organization but always of a member of an organism.”¹¹³ This shows the intimacy of us to Christ; we are like hands and feet to him.

“The union between Christ and his people is mysterious. It may be illustrated but cannot be fully explained. It is analogous to the union between husband and wife, who are declared to be **one flesh** to express their community of life, and is especially analogous to the union between Adam and Eve because she derived her life from his flesh. As the relationships are thus analogous, what is said of the one may be said of the other. To prove this and to justify the use of the language which he had employed, the apostle cites the language of God in Genesis 2:24.”¹¹⁴

“And Adam said:

“This is now bone of my bones

And flesh of my flesh;

She shall be called Woman,

Because she was taken out of Man.”

Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” (Genesis 2:23–24, NKJV)

Ephesians 5:31 “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”

joined.... Or “To glue one thing to another.”¹¹⁵

become one flesh.... Eve was literally one flesh with Adam:

¹¹¹ Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 428.

¹¹² *For γάρ* “a causative particle ... expressing the reason for what has been before, affirmed or implied.” Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

¹¹³ Harold W. Hoehner, Philip W. Comfort, and Peter H. Davids, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Philemon.*, vol. 16 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 118.

¹¹⁴ Charles Hodge, *Ephesians*, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 197.

¹¹⁵ *joined προσκολλάω*, Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

“And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.” (Genesis 2:21–22, NKJV)

However, Paul’s use of **one flesh** is used in a metaphorical sense in this passage. The relationship between husband and wives is to resemble that of Adam and Eve; their closeness is to appear to be as close as it was with Adam and Eve.

Ephesians 5:32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

What is mysterious about this? “It is the union between Christ and his people, the fact that they are **one flesh**, that he declares to be a **great mystery**. The word **mystery** is used here, as it is everywhere else, for something hidden, something beyond the reach of human knowledge.”¹¹⁶ If it was not understood before, because it was a **great mystery**, it is to be understood now.

A Review of Each Partner’s Responsibilities (5:33)

Ephesians 5:33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Here, in conclusion, Paul reiterates his main points. Husbands are to love their wives as themselves, and wives are to respect or **fear** their husbands.

respects¹¹⁷.... The word used here for *respect* is not actually *respect* but **fear**. Notice 5:21, where we started this study.

“submitting to one another in the **fear** of God.” (Ephesians 5:21, NKJV)

In fact, these verses, 5:21 and 5:33, are *inclusios* around this teaching unit. So, in some sense, fear and submit are used in a similar way.

“submitting to one another in the fear of God.” (Ephesians 5:21, NKJV)

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.” (Ephesians 5:22, NKJV)

And now, ***let the wife see that she respects [fears] her husband.***

At the judgment on the last day, everyone will fear God; the lost in anticipation of hell but also the saved, although in anticipation of heaven. But it is the nature of God that he be feared either with dread or with joy, for, in fact, he is a fearful God. Nothing in the universe is more frightening than God, certainly not Satan. “Fear” need not involve

¹¹⁶ Charles Hodge, *Ephesians*, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 198–199.

¹¹⁷ *respects* φοβέω “to have such awe or respect for a person as to involve a measure of fear—‘to fear, to show great reverence for, to show great respect for.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 734.

fright or terror *but* conveys a more serious sense of reverence and obligation than “respect.”¹¹⁸ The word *respect* is a little bit weak in this context.

“Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.” (Romans 13:7, NKJV)

Submission, even of equal members as in the Trinity, is a part of God’s existence and is an integral part of his universe. We are to submit to one another, and wives are to submit to husbands. That is the natural order of things in God’s universe.

¹¹⁸ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 366.