

Ephesians Chapter Five

RECEIVING AND EXTENDING CHRIST'S LOVE (5:1-2)

1 Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

- **Once we begin to receive God's love, we begin to extend his love to others.**
 - The verses immediately before said, 'be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.' In other words 'God himself, especially through the cross, demonstrated his kindness, compassion, mercy and love.'
 - Receiving God's love toward us motivates and enables us to love others in two ways:
 - 1) Being loved by God gives us the *security* we need to truly love others. That is why he reminds us that we are 'dearly loved children'.
 - 2) Being loved by God gives us the *example* we need to love others. That is why it says we are to 'follow God's example'.
- **Christ's love for us is intensely affectionate.**
 - We are 'God's dearly loved children'. He loves us intensely. He does not just choose to love us, he *feels* love for us. He loves us like a parent loves a child - with intense affection.
 - Similarly, we need to learn to love people with deep affection.
- **Christ's love for us was deeply sacrificial.**
 - Christ does not just feel love for us - he also chooses to love us by 'giving himself up for us'. In our place he is punished and banished. He does for us what we cannot do for ourselves. And it costs him his life. He even prays in Matthew 26 for another way, but God makes it clear that the way to save us is by the cross. He does what needs to be done for our good.
 - Similarly, we need to lay down our lives for each other as an act of love.
- **Christ's love for us was his act of worship to God.**
 - Christ's love-motivated, sacrificial death for us brought deep honour to God. For God it was a 'fragrant' offering. His sacrifice for us was really a sacrifice for God. Similarly, God sees when we embrace a cost to love others and it brings him joy. It is first and foremost not an act of love to a person, but an act of worship to God.

- Similarly, our highest motivation in loving people is that it is a form of worship to God. It honours him and brings him pleasure.

WARNING: SINS TO BE AVOIDED (5:3-6)

3 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for the Lord's people. 4 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

- **Sins of the body, the heart, and the mouth need to be repented of and avoided.**
 - Sins of the body include sexual immorality or any kind of impurity. Of this there must not even be a hint! Instead we should be people who pursue sexual purity and self-control, abstaining till marriage and then celebrating our covenant sexually in marriage - and in marriage alone.
 - The sin of the heart mentioned is greed or covetousness. Interestingly, some people's major temptation will not be sexual, but more in their heart - manifesting in something like an ungodly discontent and a restless longing for what others have.
 - The sins of the mouth include obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking. Instead we should use our mouths in ways that encourage people (4:29) and thank God (v4).
- **These sins should be avoided because they are out of place.**
 - As a new holy person in Christ you need to 'put on' a whole new suit of clothing - of which these things no longer suit you at all. The Greek word literally says that these things do not 'fit' God's people. They're just not reflective of who you already are. You are made for so much more. You're a swan acting like a duck when you do these things.
 - Interestingly, he does not list a whole bunch of negative consequences of these sins (and there are many) but rather he keeps pointing us to the Gospel-motivations for godliness: in this case we need to live compatibly with our new identity as God's holy people.

5 For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

- ***A warning about this life:* When a Christian lives in compromise he/she forfeits the privilege to enjoy the full blessings of the kingdom.**
 - This verse is commonly misunderstood because people think that Paul means that 'inheritance in the kingdom' here refers to

'heaven'. So they wrongly assume Paul is saying that if a person is in compromise it means that they are not really saved, or perhaps have even lost their salvation. But Paul is *not* saying this for two reasons:

- 'Inheritance', as we have already seen in Ephesians 1, is something over and above salvation: it includes all that God wants us to receive from him and achieve for him in this life and in the next.
- The whole verse is written in the present tense. So it can be read, 'No person who is *at this present time* immoral ... has *at this present time* any inheritance...' It is therefore not speaking about the next life, but about this life. So it does not refer to the loss of heaven.
- They have sowed to the sinful nature, and they have reaped destruction (Gal 6:8). Let us be warned to refuse the compromise that undermines all that God has for us to receive and achieve! We can live in sin and enjoy God's presence at the same time (Psalm 15:1).

6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. 7 Therefore do not be partners with them.

- ***A warning about the future: If Christians act like non-Christians they will experience God's anger against sins on Judgement Day.***
 - Eaton translates 'because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient' as 'because of such things God's wrath is coming upon the children of disobedience'.
 - The wrath is already on its way. It is being stored up to be poured out (Romans 2:5). And it is non-Christians (i.e. children of disobedience) who are still under the wrath of God (Ephesians 2:3) who will experience the full brunt of that judgment. This verse warns, however, that compromising Christians, though still getting into heaven, will be hurt in some way. They will be 'hurt by the second death' (Rev 2:11), they will suffer loss as they are saved through fire (1 Cor 3:15), they will lose reward (Hebrews 10:26-31 is really a warning about loss of reward, not salvation as seen in verse 35).
 - This is desperately sad. A person can be saved 'as through fire' (1 Cor 3:15). They're saved but when they finally enter heaven they smell like hell, and they have failed to store up treasure in heaven.
 - The phrase 'therefore do not be partners with them' does not mean, 'do not be friends with them', but rather 'do not participate with non-Christians in sin'.
- Negative motivation does play a part in Christians pursuing godliness.

- Verses 5-7 have introduced a fourth motivation for godliness by Christians. We have already seen that three other motivations include:
 - **The Spirit** leads us in the way of godliness.
 - Godly behaviour is totally compatible with and reflective of our new **identity** in Christ. Live out your new identity.
 - **Love** for people insists of treating them in a godly way.
- But these verses highlight a fourth motivation: There is so much we can lose if we don't pursue godliness! We can lose our **inheritance** in this life, and we can lose the joy of receiving reward in heaven. To sum it up, 'Being transformed into the likeness of Jesus is motivated by 1) the Spirit, 2) our new identity as saved people of God, 3) Love and 4) Inheritance.'
- It is interesting that Paul never tried to motivate us toward godliness with any of reasons these: 'If you don't change, you'll go to hell.', 'Change and your life will be so much easier and more fulfilled.', 'Change and God will really bless your life.' He was calling us to change for far higher reasons.

WALKING IN THE LIGHT (5:7-14)

- The following verses describe another way of looking at how to apply the Gospel to our lives: Paul, still on the theme of godliness (or applying the Gospel to our lives) now approaches the theme from yet another angle - using the metaphor of light and darkness...

7 Therefore do not be partners with them.

8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light

- **Outside of Christ we were darkness.**
 - Darkness refers to spiritual blindness, to being stuck in sin. It refers to how we hide our sinfulness from others in shame. It speaks of the secrecy of our lives.
 - We were not only 'in darkness' but the darkness was in us to the degree that we were darkness itself.
- **In Christ we have become light.**
 - Christ himself is 'the light of the world' but, as we are joined to him, we are not only in the light but the light is in us to the degree that we can be described as light itself. Elsewhere we are described as 'being in the light' which refers to salvation as a change of realm, but here 'being the light' refers to salvation as a change in our being, and in our spiritual identity.
 - This is an extremely powerful picture of how radical salvation is. It is like the lights have gone on in our spirits.

- **Since Christ has made us brand new people, let's live it out.**
 - The contrast between who we were in terms of our spiritual identity before we were in Christ and now that we are in Christ is radical, as radical as the contrast between darkness and light.
 - This clearly captures what Paul has been saying (in 4:20-24 for example). Since Christ has made us new creations, since we have been made alive with Christ, made holy, made the people of God, given a new identity - in light of all this - learn to live it out. Come to terms with your new identity, and then be true to that identity by living that out. Since you are no longer darkness but now are light, live as children of light.

9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord. 11 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.

- Practically speaking, what does it mean to live as children of light? It means five things:
 - 1) Give yourself to all goodness, righteousness and truth (v9).**
 - 'for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth' = Paul explains some ways that living as children of light will manifest in our lives:
 - goodness = kindness, tenderness, generosity toward people.
 - righteousness = integrity, straight dealings toward people.
 - truth = openness, the opposite of hiddenness, darkness and shame.
 - 2) Find out what pleases the Lord (v10).**
 - We are not trying to obey a bunch of rules; rather we are seeking to please a Person, Jesus the Lord. The orientation of our lives is captured in Jesus' own prayer, 'Not what I want, but what you want.'
 - We will not always know what pleases the Lord in any given situation but we must be committed to finding out what it is.
 - 3) Be attractively different to non-Christians (v11).**
 - Though we may love non-Christian people, we must not embrace their approach to life.
 - Notice the difference between the non-Christian approach to life and the Christian approach: Christians bear fruit (the word 'fruit' is mentioned in verse 9) which means that the Christ-like character traits in them come out of intimacy with Christ, and not purely out of their own moral strivings. Compare that with the phrase 'fruitless deeds' of non-Christians, which describes how all their actions and character traits flow purely out of themselves. Deeds are very different to fruit.

- As Christians our intimacy with Christ will bear fruit in our lives which will 'expose' (v11b) the fruitless deeds of non-Christian lives. Very importantly, this verse does not tell us to try and get them caught (which is a wrong understanding of the phrase 'expose them') but rather, in light of our fruitful lives, to make them question what their lives are all about.

4) Recover a sanctified sense of shame (v12).

- 'It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.'
- As we draw closer to Christ we become sensitised to the horribleness of sin. And although all around us people are callous to the perversions of our age, we are not. And we are in danger when we no longer sense the horribleness of sin. However, we must make sure we know the difference between a socialised shame (for example some people are ashamed of the fact they go to the toilet) and an authentic Spirit-sensitised shame. Not everything that our culture tells us is shameful really is shameful in the sight of God. That is why we need a 'sanctified' shame.

The fifth implication of what it means to live as children of light follows...

13 But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. 14 This is why it is said:
 "Wake up, sleeper,
 rise from the dead,
 and Christ will shine on you."

5) Help people in darkness to encounter Jesus through your life and through your message.

- 'But everything exposed by the light becomes visible – and everything that is illuminated becomes a light':
 - This picks up on the thought of how the fruit of your life 'exposes' the fruitlessness and shamefulness of their lives.
 - This verse also refers to how people who are out of touch with spiritual reality, but when they encounter a Christian who is living their light out, reality is exposed - both the horrible reality of sin, the futility of life outside of God, and the glorious reality of Christ.
- Light can only impact darkness if it goes to where the darkness is. Without saying it directly, this verse implies that, though we shy away from the wickedness of people who don't follow Jesus, we don't shy away from the people themselves. Rather, like Jesus, we 'are friends of sinners'.
- But it is not just our lives that will impact them, but our message too. Verse 14 uses three short lines from a hymn of the early church that sums this message up: 'Wake up! You are in the sleep

of spiritual death. You are in danger. Believe in Jesus. Rise from the dead. And Christ will shine on you.’

- When people do respond to the Gospel, they too will be lit up - and become children of light. In this sense what was ‘illuminated, became light too’ (v13).

LIVING WISELY (5:15-17)

- Follow the flow of thought: Verses 15-17 could be described as a subsection of what it means to be children of light, but in itself it can perhaps better be described as what it means to be children of wisdom.

15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

- **Living wisely needs to be the result of a desire to positively impact others for Christ.**
 - Notice the word ‘then’ here in v15. Verses 9-14 tells us we are light and that we need to live that light out, and that we are surrounded by sleepers (people asleep in spiritual death that Christ is seeking to wake up) who we are called to impact by our attractive different-ness and our invitation-to-life-Message (v9-14). Verses 15-17 then tell us how this call to honour God and to be true to who we are and to influence people toward Christ must profoundly motivate us to live our lives well.
- **Living wisely means taking a thoughtful and skilful approach to life.**
 - Being wise means to be ‘careful’ or ‘thoughtful’ about decisions. Being foolish has a certain carelessness or thoughtlessness. A foolish decision is one which is based on an impulsive desire, or one that does not think about the bigger picture, or about long-term consequences. Wisdom however takes many factors into decision-making. Questions such as, ‘Will this really be good for Christ’s glory in the long-run? Is this being true to who God has made me to be?’ are asked by wise people.
 - Being wise means to be skilful. It is possible to have lots of knowledge but still not to be wise. After all, wisdom is the skilful *application* of your knowledge. That is why we learn how to live not just from books, but from watching good models. Knowledge can be learnt in a short time, but wisdom is acquired over a longer time of life-experience.
- **Living wisely means being alert to the opportunities God brings (v16).**
 - Every day is filled with many opportunities to make wise decisions (rather than foolish ones) and to impact sleeping non-Christians (see v13 and 14). But we need to be alert to these opportunities, and we need to be ready to rise to the occasion. These

opportunities are not accidental, but appointed by God. Seeing life like this and constantly making ourselves available to God, is the way to live a supernatural and adventurous life.

- The phrase 'make the most of' can be translated 'redeem', which means to set something free by purchasing it. The picture here is that these opportunities are like precious items on sale in a market, but they currently are 'enslaved' - and you need to search them out, buy them and set them free. God wants you to find these opportunities, and through applying yourself to them to bring them to fulfilment.
 - This phrase can also be translated as make the most of 'the time'. The average person only has 700000 hours in their lives. We need to become highly skilled and proactive in structuring our days and weeks well. Michael Eaton recommends that we need to create our own structure of time usage, blocking out (in advance) time for things like work, friends and family, re-creation (which is different to entertainment), prayer and meditation on the Bible, and the calling God has laid on our lives. We must not waste our lives through getting involved in darkness, and missing the opportunities God has for us.
- **Living wisely means being alert to the distractions and temptations and attacks of the evil one.**
 - 'because the days are evil'
 - One motivator to make the most of every opportunity and to make the most of the time is the simple fact that the devil himself and the evil he promotes are opportunistic. They seek that Christians would not have opportunities at all, and that if there are opportunities, that we would miss them. So they work around the clock to distract us, tempt us, and attack us. But this should all the more encourage us to be highly alert to God's opportunities.
 - **Living wisely is, at essence, a dogged determination to understand and do the will of God (v17).**
 - God has a general will for all people, which he has revealed in his Word, and a specific will which he reveals partially to his people about decisions they need to make. However, and this is very important, we do not assume that God wants to make our non-moral decisions for us (who to marry, what career to pursue, where to go on holiday etc) - rather he wants to give us perspectives and wisdom, so that the decision we make are better ones. Having said that, God sometimes will tell us what decisions we need to make.
 - The only way to stay in tune with the will of God is to stay in tune with the heart of God. That is why fellowship with God is the basis of discerning his will.

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT (5:18-21)

- **Any talk of pursuing a personal life-change that changes the lives of others is incomplete without reference to the Holy Spirit.**
 - The general theme since 4:17 has been the godly life, but two of the main purposes of this godliness has been revealed in the last few verses - namely
 - 1) the impact we have on Christians (for example, we seek to build them up according to their needs, that we may 'minister grace' to them (v29) and
 - 2) the impact we will have on non-Christians - that we 'expose the fruitless deeds of darkness', that the light spreads from us to them (v13) and that we wake them up from spiritual death to glorious life in Christ (v14).
 - This section that comes on life in the Spirit (v18-20) must be seen in this context of pursuing a life-change that changes the life of others too. In other words, we can't expect to see either our lives significantly changed, nor the lives of others changed, without a radical dependence on the Spirit.

18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit,

- **Intoxicating substances should not be excessively used.**
 - This verse does not say that it is wrong to touch alcohol, but that it is wrong to get drunk. This applies to all intoxicants - which includes drugs.
 - The reason for not getting intoxicated is that it leads to 'debauchery' or 'dissipation' which means to squander one's God-given resources - to squander one's time, one's health, one's alertness, one's physical energy.
 - However this is not presented as an electric fence rule of the Christian life, but is stated in the context of something so much better - life in the Spirit. This is God's way of saying, 'Don't settle for so something so inferior - when I can give you so much better - and what I give you will not waste any of your God-given resources. One will squander your life - but I want to liberate your life.' We too must learn to communicate God's morals not in terms of what we miss out on, but in terms of what God has in store for us.
 - We certainly can drink too much wine, but - and this is Paul's invitation to us - we can never drink too much of the Spirit.
- **Although there are real differences, there are some similarities between being alcohol-filled and Spirit-filled.**
 - Eaton writes: People use 'beer and wine to feel good, to relax, to become convivial. Wine makes him talk freely, he may even start to sing. In the same way, the Spirit leads us to feel good. He gives

us a mood of relaxed confidence and authority. He makes us convivial. By the Spirit we talk freely and boldly. In the Spirit we like to sing!’

- To get drunk one must drink, and to stay drunk, one must keep on drinking. Similarly, to be filled with the Spirit we must drink, and to stay filled with the Spirit we must carry on drinking.
- **There are two main meanings for what it means to ‘be filled with the Spirit’.**
 - When one studies the words ‘fill, filled and fullness’ we see there are at least two ways this phrase can be used.
 - The first way - and we could call it a *special* filling - means ‘a sudden blessing or empowerment of the Holy Spirit for a specific moment’. In Luke 1:41 Elizabeth is filled by the Spirit and joyfully prophesies over Mary. In Acts 2:4 the 120 disciples are filled by the Spirit and are begin to worship and speak in tongues. In Acts 4:8 Peter is filled with the Spirit and powerfully replies to an enemy. In Acts 4:31 a group of them are filled with the Spirit and the room is shaken and they are given a new boldness to preach the Word.
 - The second way - and we could call it a *constant* filling - means ‘a general quality of someone’s life that makes them constantly powerful in godliness and ministry’. We see Barnabas and the deacons being described as people that were, as a descriptive quality of their lives, ‘full of the Spirit’ (Acts 6:3 and 11:24).
 - But which of the two ways is this verse used here? The answer is this: The phrase in Eph 5:18, ‘be filled with the Spirit’ describes the second kind. Paul is calling them constantly and regularly to be obedient to and rejoice in the Spirit. To be filled with the Spirit here can be compared to a sail being filled with the wind, or to a person being filled with alcohol. It is putting ourselves under the leadership and power and presence of the Spirit. We are ready to listen to him, to obey him, and eager to get rid of all blockages or hindrances to his dynamic rule over us. *There are three reasons that we know he is speaking of the general, constant kind of Spirit-fullness (as opposed to a reference to special infillings):*
 - 1) The context of Eph 4-6 is constant godliness, and, therefore, the mention of the Spirit here is a reference to constant influence of the Spirit on our lives.
 - 2) The tense is literally, ‘Be being filled with the Spirit’ and therefore describes something that is constant as opposed to sudden.
 - 3) The sudden outpourings of the Spirit are something God sovereignly does from time to time and, therefore, we cannot be commanded to be filled in this sense. We are not commanded to experience sudden outpourings (although it would be wise to seek them, and be ready for them as God chooses to give them) but we are commanded to bring our lives under the Spirit’s dynamic leadership.

19 speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

- **God doesn't just want us to experience the Spirit on our own, but also in community.**
 - The phrase in Eph 5:18 'be filled with the Spirit' is written to a community and not to individuals. It therefore means, 'be a Spirit-filled community'. In other words, a whole community can be described as being powerful in ministry and godliness because of their constant reliance on and openness to the Spirit's presence, power and leading.
 - These verses (19-21) describe marks of a Spirit-filled community - and no doubt there are more. The point is that our hunger for more of the Spirit should drive us toward community, never away from it.

- **A Spirit-filled gathering of Christians can be compared to a celebration.**
 - Parties are marked by song, celebration, music, gratitude, and a commitment to get along. And so should Christian gatherings be. We can't help thinking of Paul's analogy that being Spirit-filled as a community is like being a drunk person with other drunk people - there will be joy-filled hearts that overflow verbally.
 - Verses 19-21 can be compared to the Christian version of an ancient feast (or with a more modern picture - a bar) where people would get drunk, and sing, and get on, and have a good time. Paul is using this as analogy for the gathering of Christians. When the church gathers in the Spirit there should be joy, and singing, and people being refreshed, and people enjoying themselves - but instead of running on alcohol, we run on the Spirit's presence and leading.
 - *There are five ways these joy-filled hearts overflow verbally:*
 - 1) We sing songs that edify each other.
 - 'Speaking to one another' is better translated as 'communicating to one another'. As we gather together as Christians in the Spirit we need to be ready to sing songs, either on our own to the others, or leading the whole group in the singing. And there are different kinds of songs:
 - Psalms - These are the 150 Psalms of the Old Testament, which served as the first prayer and song book of the early church.
 - Hymns - These are the songs that were commonly sung by the early church. Our modern version would be the thousands of worship songs we currently sing.

- Songs of the Spirit (this is how the TNIV translates it)
 - These are spontaneous prophetic songs, songs that the Spirit is inspiring in the moment.
- 2) We sing songs from our heart to God. These songs do not focus on the edification of the others as much as they are songs to God. In other words when we gather we become very aware of the Presence of the God to whom we gather.
- 3) We make music, and we put our hearts into it, again to the Lord. This can apply to any instrument(s) that accompanies the singing.
- 4) We give thanks to God the Father for everything.
- 5) We submit to each other in the fear of Christ. To submit means to be a team-player, to get rid of self-promotion, self-assertion, competition and comparison - and everything else that undermines our relationships in the community. It means to be committed to getting on. To do this out of 'fear of Christ' means that we are eager to not forfeit our rewards / inheritance and we are not eager to experience his chastening.

WIVES AND HUSBANDS, part 1 (5:22-24)

- **We are not making progress in godliness if we have not considered how it impacts our marriages.**
 - No talk about godliness is complete without talking about how it impacts our daily relationships.
 - Ephesians 4-6 speaks about applying the Gospel to our lives in godliness. 4:17-24 speaks about godliness generally and 4:25-5:7 speaks of it more specifically. Then he speaks about godliness in terms of light, wisdom and life in the Spirit (5:8-21) - the last verse being a reference to 'submitting to each other'. But now he starts to speak of how godliness involves relating skilfully to people close to us: husbands, wives, children, parents, workers, employers...
- **The best thing we can do for our marriages is to root them in a vital Christian community.**
 - The life experienced in our Christian gatherings should flow into our daily relationships.
 - In 5:18-21 we have seen what a Spirit-filled Christian gathering looks like, but then amazingly Paul, without even (in the Greek) using a full-stop, shifts into the marriage relationship (5:22 onwards). In other words, great church meetings should result in great marriages! It is absurd to think that we can submit to the Spirit when gathered as Christians but then not submit to the Spirit once we are dispersed.

- **A marriage is first and foremost a team.**
 - The basic principle of all relationships - whether husbands and wives, children and parents, workers and employers - is a willingness to team together.
 - Verse 21 (which says 'submit to one another' out of reverence for Christ) reminds us that as we all live in the Spirit, a kind of mutual submission flows through all of our relationships. This means a commitment to respect each other, to get on with each other, to play on the same team. It implies an equality of status before God, even if there are different roles.
 - This is not the last thing that needs to be said, but it is the first thing - Paul is about to explain that not only are we to team, but there is such a thing as God-given authority, or leadership patterns in all these relationships. But before he gets to these leadership patterns, he wants to ensure that, especially amongst Christians, leaders lead someone they have a respectful relationship with, and followers follow someone they have a respectful relationship with. One may be a captain of the other, but they are still on the same team. And this, as we have seen in verses 19-20, is meant to be a joy-filled team.
 - But, Paul now begins to speak of roles and leadership patterns within these relationships...

22 Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.
 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

- **The exercise of authority (i.e. leadership) and submission (i.e. followership) within a Christian marriage should be shaped by the glorious truths and experience of the Gospel.**
 - In these verses Paul tells wives to submit and husbands to be heads. BUT, and this is very important, this is not where the emphasis is. He is not trying to persuade people to submit, and to lead - he assumes that generally people, especially in his day, do understand that the husband is leader. Rather than trying to persuade them to lead / follow he is trying to shape the very way that they lead / follow - by helping them to see their relationship in a whole new way, a way informed by the Gospel.
- **Wives are to submit to their husbands as a way of expressing security in, and worship to Jesus.**
 - The phrase 'as you do to the Lord' (v22) should be translated 'as something you do for the Lord'. It echoes the prior thought of submitting to each other 'out of reverence for Christ' (v21). This implies that she finds great joy and security in her direct relationship with Christ, who is her Saviour and her Head, and

that, from that well-spring, is ready to entrust her life to her husband's leadership.

- It must be remembered that these verses connect directly to the instruction to 'be filled with the Spirit.' Only a Spirit-filled wife can truly submit to her husband in the way described here. If we are not controlled by the Spirit, our sinful tendencies to self-assertion, self-promotion, and rebellious independence will get in the way.
- **A wife's submission does not imply either inequality or suppressed contribution.**
 - The metaphor of body to head is powerful in that it does not imply inequality or suppressed contribution. The wife is in no way inferior. She is not less human. She is not less Christian. She has no less access to the Spirit. She does not have less gifting or intelligence. The picture of a body and a head is one of interdependence, where one cannot exist nor thrive without the other. It is a picture of team-work.
- **Husbands need to lead their wives in a cherishing way, not in a domineering way.**
 - Let's explore that simple metaphor: Christ is head of the church, his body. What else has Paul already said of this in this letter? Paul speaks of Christ's headship in two ways:
 - 1) Christ is *confrontational head* over all his rivals. This is the emphasis in 1:19-21 where it speaks of Christ conquering death, and having authority over all competing powers, dominions, rules and authorities. Now, when Paul speaks about husband as head of the wife, he is *not* referring to this kind of confrontational authority over a rival. That is *not* how a husband leads.
 - 2) Christ is *benevolent head* of his church. This is the emphasis of 1:22,23 which says that 'Christ is head over everything (i.e. over competing rivals) for the benefit of the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all things in every way.' These verses tell us how Jesus relates to the church: Firstly, we see that his authority exists for her benefit. And all that he has accomplished, and all his strength is so that she will succeed and become all she can become. Secondly, we see that he is profoundly interconnected with, and interdependent on her, like a head is with a body. He has chosen to team with her, and to live life together as one.
 - So, when a husband is head over his wife it does not mean he exercises a *confrontational* authority over her as a rival, but rather that he exercises a *benevolent* authority, where he gives his life for her benefit, where all his strength and success in other areas of life is channelled into her security, her growth, her benefit, her wholeness; where he is profoundly interconnected with her, and where they live life together as a team, and as one.

- **It is the wife's responsibility to be ready to follow with the right spirit.**
 - Verses 22-24 are written to wives, not to husbands. That is what God is wanting to say to wives not husbands. In other words, the cry of a wife's heart should be, 'Husband, we are a team, and you are the team-leader. I am ready to follow your captaincy. Lead me into our good.' This should come from the wife, not be insisted on by the husband.
 - A wife's submission to her husband is a commitment to respect and trust and support her husband's leadership. 'For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church.' Paul uses two interwoven analogies for this submission:
 - 1) The submission of the church to Christ: the church chooses to respect and trust and support Christ's leadership. Similarly, the wife chooses to submit to her husband.
 - 2) The submission of the body to the head: imagine a body that did not choose to trust and respect and support the head. Similarly, the wife chooses to submit to her husband.
 - Interestingly, there is a way a wife can follow which draws the leadership out of her husband, who through fear or laziness is not leading. She must find this way with God's wisdom. Sadly, many women, experiencing a leadership vacuum because of their husband's laziness or fear, begin to lead. But a better option is to do all you can to try and draw his leadership out of him.
 - The phrase 'in everything' (v24) speaks of a whole-hearted willingness to follow. Obviously, it does not mean that every single decision you make needs to be green-lighted by the husband, but it does mean a readiness to seek the husband's counsel in all major decisions.

- ***Special pastoral section:* Every married couple needs to work out for themselves how they practically work out in their daily lives these two truths:**
 - 1) the couple is to be a team, and
 - 2) the husband is to be the team-leader of the team.
 - 1) First and foremost, they both need to seek to be a team. This simple truth that a couple is a team has radical implications. And every couple needs to work those implications out for themselves. Some of the implications may be:
 - Having a joint-bank account.
 - Learning to minister together.
 - Refusing to compete with each other.
 - Praying together several times a week.
 - Discerning the call on the marriage, not just on the individual lives.
 - Deferring at times to the other person's areas of gifting and competency.
 - Talking to each other before making decisions that impact upon both lives.

2) But over and above the concept of teaming, the husband is the servant-team-leader. Again, each couple needs to work out the implications of this. Some possible implications of this are:

- If in a dangerous situation, the husband is ready to give his life to save his wife's - and not the other way around. Wives are not meant to die so their husbands will live, but rather husbands are meant to be willing to die so their wives live.
- The husband carries the burden for providing for and protecting the wife (and the kids for that matter). This does not mean that he alone needs to generate an income, but that it is he, not she who carries the burden of this. If there is going to be financial difficulty, he should be the first to see it coming, not her. And he should be initiating some solutions. Similarly, he not she carries the burden of the physical security of the family.
- The husband is, generally, first up in the morning to seek God and cover his wife and family in prayer, and last to bed to make sure all are safe.
- The husband keeps on proactively directing the team towards passion for God, towards involvement in church, and towards the fulfilling of God's call on the couple. Although the wife shares the same pro-activity and eagerness, there is something wrong when she keeps on having to encourage him to pray, to read the Word, to get involved in church and to fulfil the call on the marriage.
- In a very difficult decision that requires immediate decision-making the husband, after listening intently to his wife, makes the final decision - and the decision is based not on what is preferable for himself, but on what is best for both. And always the best way to make the decision is through reaching consensus, but if this is not possible and a decision must be made, then the husband makes the call, and the wife should freshly entrust herself to the husband's decision.
- The husband does all he can to find the strength, the courage, and the wisdom he needs to lead this team. He does this through seeking God and through seeking mentoring from other seasoned, Christ-like married men.
- A wife, however, does not need to follow her husband when he tries to lead her into sin. Her highest authority is God after all (see Acts 5:29). Although her husband is her head, he is not her Lord. Only Jesus is that to her.
- What if a husband is not a Christian, or what if he is not very wise and sensitive in the way he leads? 1 Peter 3:1-6 speaks about this, but the answer is that, first and foremost she entrusts herself to Jesus, and then to her husband. Jesus calls her to follow her husband, and that's why she does it - not because the husband is deserving or easy to follow but out of her security in Christ. Her reward is Christ. However, on top of this, doing this makes it more likely for her husband to change for the good.

HUSBANDS AND WIVES, part 2 (5:25-33)

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing [b] her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives

- **Husbands need to become the kind of husbands who are a joy to follow.**
 - Verses 22-24 have been directed to wives. Now these verses are directed to husbands. Imagine Paul just told wives to follow their husbands, but then did not tell husbands to be a joy to follow. That would be cruel! And he does not do that. In fact he only takes up three verses speaking to wives about the kind of wives they should be, but he spends eight verses speaking to men about the kind of husbands they should be.
- **Husbands need, out of a growing experience of Christ's sacrificial love, to love their wives.**
 - This love for his wife must be sacrificial. He must make it his highest priority, and must be willing to exert huge amounts of energy into loving his wife. He must regularly and routinely say no to some of his own desires and, letting go of them, give himself for her benefit.
 - This love for his wife must aim at her holiness and her wholeness. Just like Jesus makes the church holy, and radiant, so the husband needs to keep at the fore of his mind the question, 'How can I help my wife become all God wants her to be - holy and whole?'
- **A wife will begin to shine when her husband loves her.**
 - Christ gave himself up for his bride, the church - but in return he gets a radiant church. In the same way, the love of a husband for a wife should bring out the best in her. She should come alive and deeply thrive in his love. Conversely, a wife can begin to shrivel up as a person when her life is dominated by the insecurity and misery of not being loved by her husband.

28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, people have never hated their own bodies, but they feed and care for them, just as Christ does the church— 30 for we are members of his body. 31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."

- **Husbands need to see their wives as extensions of their very selves (v28,29).**

- Paul has compared a husband and a wife to a head joined to a body. Which head would not nourish (or feed) and cherish (care) for its own body? Which head would neglect or destroy its own body? Similarly, husbands - as they realise that their wives are extensions of themselves - must not neglect or hurt their wives, but must do all they can to nourish and cherish them.
- **The marriage relationship is to be the closest of all relationships (v31).**
 - Paul quotes from Genesis 2:24. Paul switches from the one-flesh picture of a head and its body (which he has explored from v23-29), to the one-flesh picture of Adam and Eve, where Eve has been taken from his body, and who through marriage is in a sense re-united.
 - In Genesis 2:24 (quoted in v31) we see a few things about marriage:
 - Marriage is the beginning of a new family unity. A man leaves his father and mother, and the fact that his family primary identity is them, and starts his own family.
 - Marriage calls for an intimacy shared that is to be closer than the intimacy shared between children and their parents.
 - Marriage is 'the forsaking of all others' - in other words bonding to, teaming with and loving one's partner becomes a higher priority than any other relationship.
 - Marriage is about the forming of a new union - where the other person is an extension of yourself.
 - Marriage is a covenant that is to be celebrated and sealed through sexual intimacy. This is the meaning of 'one flesh'. This is why sex is for marriage alone. It is a life-uniting act that is meant to be enjoyed in the context of a life-uniting covenant of marriage.

32 This is a profound mystery - but I am talking about Christ and the church.
 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

- **Our marriages should be a picture of the Gospel to the people around us (v32).**
 - The quality of our marriages, and our profound capacities to respect, love and trust each other is meant to display the love of Christ for his church to the world.
- **Marriage is one of the chief environments God uses to shape our lives toward Christlikeness.**
 - Marriage is profoundly mysterious (v32). Since marriage is meant to be a living metaphor of something else, it has many layers of meaning. Certainly, one layer of meaning is the one mentioned in

verse 26 - that marriage is the environment God uses to sanctify us and make us more like Jesus. Becoming like Jesus is impossible in isolation, and it is impossible to meaningfully do in the context of superficial relationships. One of the ideal places for Christ to iron out character flaws and teach us a robust Christ-like character is in the very close, very intensive relationship of marriage. To the degree we co-operate with Christ's sanctifying work to that degree will our marriage be a joy. There is nothing that can hurt a marriage like a stubborn refusal to change. And we don't change primarily because our spouse wants us to change, but rather because Jesus wants us to change.

- **A good starting point for a marriage is to meet the most basic need in the other person (v33).**
 - The most foundational need of a wife is love - which is why the husband needs to love his wife. Of course a wife needs respect, but statistics confirm that most women have an even more basic need for love. A loved wife will more likely be a happy wife.
 - The most foundational need of a husband is respect - which is why the wife needs to respect her husband. Of course a husband needs love, but statistics confirm that most men have an even more basic need for respect. A respected husband will more likely be a happy husband.

CHRIST AND THE CHURCH (5:22-33)

- Let's look at Eph 5:22-33 again but not to learn what it tells us about marriage, but rather about Christ and the church. There are two main metaphors: The church as Christ's body and the church as Christ's bride.

<p>22 Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife <i>as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour</i>. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.</p>
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- **One way to picture Christ's relationship with the church is to think of a husband's relationship with his wife.**
 - The first truth to notice is that Christ is the loving leader-husband of his church (v23). He is 'the head of the church' which refers directly to Eph 1:22, 23 which tells us that though Christ is head *over* all powers and authorities he is head *for* the benefit of the church. He longs to see her succeed, and he sees her as an extension of himself.
 - The second truth to notice is that Christ is the sacrificial Saviour of his bride (v23). We will pick up on this again in verse 24.
 - The third truth to notice is that the church should ideally respond to her husband, Christ, with a willingness to entrust herself *totally* to his care and will.

25 Husbands, love your wives, *just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing [b] her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.*

- **Christ is profoundly motivated by his longing for and his love for his bride.**
 - These verses pick up on Ezekiel 16 which speaks of how God took a rejected baby girl, nursed her to health and maturity of age, and then married her and made her the most beautiful women in the world. This included washing her of her shame and pain and sins. It is a picture of how God, in his sovereign grace, takes something that is abandoned and unwanted, like sinful and weak human beings, and then makes them his own in marriage. And then, now married, makes them beautiful and whole.
 - Jesus came into this world seeking a bride. And part of what motivated him - the joy set before him on the cross (see Hebrews 12:2) - was the prospect of this bride who would be his.
 - The amazing thing is that ‘the people of God together’ constitute this bride. To be in a covenant relationship with Christ can be compared in some ways to being married to Christ.

- **Christ takes the church for himself.**
 - She belongs to him - this is the meaning of ‘to make her holy’. And she is ultimately presented to him in intimacy and worship and tender surrender. Verse 27 - he presents her to himself. So the first purpose of the bride is that she is something beautiful for Jesus. But the second purpose is that she would partner with him, and reflect and represent him in the world. In this sense she is presented to all heaven and earth, and has a role in God’s work in the world. But this second purpose is preceded by, and flows out of the first priority purpose: intimacy with Christ!

- **Christ’s love means that Christ made the church his own through his sacrifice for her.**
 - *‘Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy’.* The word ‘holy’ here refers to the once-and-for-all setting apart of the church. It is another way of saying that he took her as his own, not to be shared by another. This refers to Ezekiel 16 where God says, ‘You were old enough to get married so I wrapped my cloak around you to cover your nakedness and declared my marriage vows ... and you became mine’ (Eze 16:8).

- **Christ's love means that he is committed to washing away her sins through the transforming power of the Word.**
 - He is '*cleansing her by the washing with water through the word*'. This refers to Ezekiel 16:9: 'Then (now that I had made you mine) I bathed you and washed off your blood, and I rubbed fragrant oils in your skin.' Although Christ has already made us holy and taken us as his bride, he is still busy cleansing us from our sin. The way he does this is through exposing us to his Word.

- **Christ's love means that he is committed to the total beautification of his bride.**
 - He is committed to *presenting her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless*. This picks up on Ezekiel 16:10-14 which says... '10 I clothed you with an embroidered dress and put sandals of fine leather on you. I dressed you in fine linen and covered you with costly garments. 11 I adorned you with jewellery: I put bracelets on your arms and a necklace around your neck, 12 and I put a ring on your nose, earrings on your ears and a beautiful crown on your head. 13 So you were adorned with gold and silver; your clothes were of fine linen and costly fabric and embroidered cloth. Your food was honey, olive oil and the finest flour. You became very beautiful and rose to be a queen. 14 And your fame spread among the nations on account of your beauty, because the splendour I had given you made your beauty perfect, declares the Sovereign LORD.' Christ is committed to not only removing our sins, shame, weaknesses and character flaws, but he is committed to make us beautiful as a church, radiant and totally faithful to him.

- **Christ's love gives the church a bright future.**
 - He promises that in the end she will be beautiful. The end is when Christ returns to this world ready to receive his bride! He promises she will be ready when he comes! This can give us great confidence. Jesus is as committed to the beautification of a bride, as any man is who waits for his bride to walk down the aisle.

28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, people have never hated their own bodies, but they feed and care for them, just as Christ does the church— 30 for we are members of his body.

- **The church is an extension of Christ and, therefore, can be sure of his nourishing and cherishing.**
 - Two metaphors overlap here. The first metaphor is that the church is *Christ's body*. (This develops Eph 1:22,23 some more.) The other metaphor is that the church is *Christ's bride*. But both these metaphors have the same meaning: the church is an extension of Christ, and that is why he is so committed to it.

- The fact that we're an extension of Christ in the earth means that we represent him in this world, it means that he is intimately connected to us, it means that we share in his glory and wisdom and strength, but most importantly that he is committed to 'feed us and care for us (v30)'.
- The word 'feed' means his commitment to nourish us, much like he nourished the bride in Ezekiel 16:13: '*Your food was honey, olive oil and the finest flour.*' The word 'care' means his heart-felt cherishing of us. He prizes us, and places great value on us, and attends to the details of our lives.
- When we think of being 'in Christ' we need to think of it with at least two pictures that Ephesians has revealed: as a wife united to her husband, and as a body joined to its head.

31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." 32 This is a profound mystery - but I am talking about Christ and the church.

- **The union between Christ and his church is simply profound, especially when we see that the union between Adam and Eve serves as a foreshadowing analogy of Christ and his bride.**
 - Verse 31 quotes Genesis 2:24 which refers to Adam and Eve.
 - 'This is a profound mystery' means there are depths of meaning here (in Genesis 2:24) that need real pondering. Some Bible students have given some thought to the Adam-Eve picture and seen some stunning parallels for Christ's relationship to the church. It must be noted that the metaphor cannot be pushed too far, and we cannot be sure Paul was referring to this, but here are some parallels...
 - In Gen 2:18-20 we see God's commitment to give Adam a bride-companion, a companion suitable for him. Similarly, the Father has always wanted to give Christ a bride-companion.
 - In Gen 2:21,22 the Lord God caused Adam to sleep and took part of his side, which then closed up, and he made a woman from it and brought her to Adam. Similarly, Christ died on the cross (he fell into sleep), he was pierced in his side, and mysteriously and wonderfully, through his sacrificial death, a bride came into being. He rose from the dead (from the sleep) totally restored ready to receive his bride.
 - In Gen 2:23 we see the thrill of Adam when he sees Eve - and part of what thrills him is that she is an extension of him, 'bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh'. Similarly, Jesus experienced intense thrill at the sight of his bride, the very bride who came into being through his sacrifice, the very bride who is an expression of himself.

- This way of reading these verses, assuming this is what Paul was possibly referring to, shows that God created marriage as a metaphor of the Gospel, the message that says that all of history is essentially about Jesus creating, preparing and coming for his bride.