

## p 81 WEEK 11: WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

Ephesians 5:15–6:9

### The Place of the Passage

After exhorting the Ephesians to embrace general Christian virtues and warning them against general worldly vices, Paul now provides instructions for living out the calling of Christ within the spheres of home and work. The command to be filled with the Spirit joins the command to walk wisely, indicating that the believer needs Spirit-filled wisdom, in addition to Spirit-wrought power for love and submission, to carry out these commands. Recurring themes related to the gospel and the will of God in these verses accent the entire theological thrust of Ephesians.

### The Big Picture

Ephesians 5:15–6:9 calls believers to Christlike actions in marriage, parenting, and work habits. Each set of instructions will make multiple appeals to the person and work of “the Lord”/“Christ,” looking back to the one who has blessed the Ephesians with every spiritual blessing (5:22, 23, 25, 29; 6:1, 4, 5, 6, 9). The worship wrought by the filling of the Spirit begins the discussion as the necessary means of carrying out these instructions, which are often referred to as Paul’s “household code.”

### p 82 Reflection and Discussion

**Read through Ephesians 5:15–6:9, the passage for this week’s study. Then review the following questions, taking notes on this significant contribution to Ephesians’ full message. (For further background, see the *ESV Study Bible*, pages 2271–2273; available online at [www.esvbible.org](http://www.esvbible.org).)**

#### 1. Wisdom and Filling for Worship and Submission (Eph. 5:15–21)

The final “walk” command contrasts wise ways of living with foolish decisions (5:15). In this context, why does Paul call for discernment by believers concerning their use of time? In contrast to living unwisely and foolishly, how does a believer discern the “will of the Lord”?

Paul juxtaposes “drunk with wine” with “filled with the Spirit” (5:18). What sort of differences characterize one who enjoys debauchery and one whose life gives evidence of being full of the Spirit? Why might each of the acts of a Spirit-filled life make the Ephesians’ gospel proclamation appealing to those living as pagans?

With what corporate actions would the Ephesians have followed the instruction, “addressing *one another* in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs”?

### p 83 2. Wisdom-Filled Marriage (Eph. 5:22–33)

Paul brings wisdom, and the submission of one filled with the Spirit, to the discussion of Christian marriage. It is evident from the pattern in 5:22–6:9 that those in subordinate roles practice submission—i.e., wives submit to husbands (5:22), children obey parents (6:1), bondservants obey masters (6:5)—and not vice versa. Those in authority act in wisdom toward their subordinates, i.e., husbands love sacrificially (5:25), fathers avoid provoking their children to anger (6:4), masters treat their slaves fairly (6:9). Why does a wife’s submissive character bring glory to Christ in the world? Based on the analogy of Christ, what is the scope of the authority granted to a husband in a Christian marriage?

Paul calls husbands to a love of their wives shaped profoundly by Christ’s work for the church on the cross—he “gave himself up for her” (5:25). What was Christ’s goal for the church when he died in her place (vv. 26–27)? How, then, might the commands given to the Christian husband make greater demands than the commands given to the Christian wife?

How should the body analogies of a man’s self-care and Christ’s work for the church inform the husband’s practice of love toward his wife?

p 84 Paul teaches that the original institution of marriage spoke about Christ and the church as a mystery (Gen. 2:24; Eph. 5:32). If the analogy concerns Christ’s *incarnation* (“leave his father”) and *death* (“hold fast to his wife”), to what does “the two shall become one flesh” correspond? Why does the analogy require “love” and “respect” from a husband and wife in a Christian marriage?

### 3. Wisdom-Filled Children and Parents (6:1–4)

Christ should transform the behavior of a redeemed child and a redeemed father of believing children. On what basis can Paul make the blanket judgment “for this is right” when instructing children to obey parents “in the Lord” (6:1)? What common social factors would prompt Paul to use the promise of Exodus 20:12, “that your days may be long in the land,” to motivate a child to obedience?

Why is it important for a Christian father to avoid provoking his children to anger? How does one faithfully educate a child Christianly in the home? What might the instruction to fathers say about the necessity of dependence on the Holy Spirit?

**p 85 4. Wisdom-Filled Slaves and Masters (6:5–9)**

In Roman culture, a bondservant could own his own property; but even so, he may have had limited rights under his master and could have become the object of abuse. Yet one should not think of contemporary forms of racially driven slavery, kidnapping of children to make soldiers, or sex trafficking when thinking of the bondservants mentioned in the Bible, for they are not equivalent. A better modern-day comparison would be an employee under the authority of a supervisor, manager, or owner. In 6:5–8, Paul adds eight modifying clauses to the command for slaves to obey. How would obeying masters to the extent of each modifying clause have worked to transform and dismantle slavery in Ephesus?

What significance would God’s rewarding bondservants and freemen equally (6:8) give to the obedience of the bondservant to his earthly master?

Why is threatening one employed as a bondservant contrary to the gospel? How might knowledge of an impartial Master in heaven guide a Christian employer’s treatment of his employees (6:9)?

**p 86 Read through the following three sections on *Gospel Glimpses*, *Whole-Bible Connections*, and *Theological Soundings*. Then take time to consider the *Personal Implications* these sections may have for you.**

### **Gospel Glimpses**

**SANCTIFICATION.** Those made morally unclean by sin may not approach God. Yet all persons in this world are stained by sin, and believers still sin even after their justification in Christ. Christ, however, is actively purifying his bride from all remaining sin (Eph. 5:26). In his death, Christ provided the cleansing that gives the believer a new status before God. In his present rule, Christ faithfully works to set the believer apart from sin for holiness until the entire church comes before him as a bride adorned in perfect beauty (v. 27).

### **Whole-Bible Connections**

**COSMIC MARRIAGE.** There is mystery associated with marriage—the mystery of the gospel. In the history of salvation, the initial relationship God establishes between Adam and Eve is that of marriage (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:4–5). God identifies Israel as his wife on the basis of their covenantal relationship (Hos. 2:2, 16, 19). Yet Israel is found guilty of adultery as she seeks after idols (Ex. 34:15; Jer. 2:35–36; Hos. 3:1). This cosmic marriage experiences divorce as the wife’s worship turns to other lovers (Isa. 50:1; Jer. 3:8; Hos. 2:2). The Lord alone makes provisions to receive back his wife (Hos. 1:10–11; 2:14–15). In calling the church his bride, Christ intends for earthly marriage to display the hope of the heavenly marriage (Eph. 5:23, 27, 31–32). When the people of God are glorified, we all will enjoy marriage to Christ, rejoice in the marriage supper of

the Lamb (Rev. 19:7, 9), and enjoy the consummation of the eternal marriage forever and ever (Rev. 21:1–4).

**CORPORATE SINGING.** Israel first sings together as one people immediately after deliverance from Egypt and God’s defeat of their enemies (Exodus 15). The call to congregational singing is strong in the psalms (Pss. 21:13; 30:4; 33:3; 47:6–7; 95:1). Psalm singers exhort the people of the nations, too, to sing to the Lord in anticipation of his salvation of all nations (Pss. 66:4; 67:4; 68:32; 96:1; 98:4). Corporate singing is the act of a people excited about, and grateful for, their Savior and Redeemer (Isa. 26:19; 44:23; 49:13; 52:8; Jer. 31:12; Zech. 2:10). It is a simple yet heartfelt way for the united corporate body of God’s people to exalt him with praise and thanksgiving for his mighty acts in creation and salvation. On this side of the cross, Paul encourages congregational singing as both a result of being filled with the Spirit and a means of deepening a congregation in the wisdom of the Word of God as the members sing to “one another” p 87 (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). The apostle places emphasis on the heart of the believer before Christ regardless of the style of song (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:17). Singing congregationally will be the church’s experience for all of eternity as we are enveloped in the glory and love of God forever (Zeph. 3:17; Rev. 5:9; 14:3; 15:3).

## Theological Soundings

**SLAVERY.** Slavery is one of the oldest institutions of man. While some cultures have practiced slavery as a means of helping the poor or employing skilled workers (Ex. 21:1–6; Deut. 15:12–18), many cultures use slavery as a means to separate and subjugate a class or race of people, while exalting the owners and making them wealthy. Paul’s instructions on slavery and the slave-master relationship are complex. Although he never calls for dismantling the institution, he does encourage Christian slaves to gain their freedom when possible (1 Cor. 7:21). However, those who remain slaves to human masters should see themselves as free in Christ (1 Cor. 7:22). Peter would later add that slaves should submit themselves even to masters who treat them cruelly or unjustly, following the example of Christ (1 Pet. 2:18–25). The godly actions of believing slaves and masters manifest the life-changing power of Christ to all (Titus 2:9), make the slaves better employees (Eph. 6:6–7), promote brotherhood and equality in Christ between slave and master (v. 9; Philem. 15–16), and give dignity to all slaves as Christian masters deal kindly with those under their authority (Eph. 6:9). The fact that slavery in the modern world is not practiced with any sense of Christian ideals, but instead degrades, abuses, tortures, and dehumanizes people as captives, sex objects, or property, argues for the Christian to seek the abolition of slavery today as an act of justice (Ps. 82:4; Prov. 21:3, 15; 24:10–12; Isa. 58:6–7; Mic. 6:8; Matt. 12:18–20; Luke 11:42).

**THANKSGIVING.** Giving thanks to the Lord from the heart is a result of being full of the Spirit of God (Eph. 5:20). It is an acknowledgment that all comes from God, and that he is doing good toward his own (2 Chron. 7:3; Pss. 106:1; 107:1). Thanksgiving looks for the goodness of God in all circumstances and all people (Col. 3:17; 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Thess. 1:3). The continual giving of thanks reveals a heart and mind saturated with Christ.

## Personal Implications

Take time to reflect on the implications of Ephesians 5:15–6:9 for your own life today. Consider what you have learned that might lead you to praise God, repent of sin, and trust in his gracious promises. Make notes below on the personal implications for your walk with the Lord of the (1) *Gospel Glimpses*, (2) *Whole-Bible Connections*, (3) *Theological Soundings*, and (4) this passage as a whole.

p 88 1. Gospel Glimpses

2. Whole-Bible Connections

3. Theological Soundings

4. Ephesians 5:15–6:9

## As You Finish This Unit ...

Take a moment now to ask for the Lord's blessing and help as you continue in this study of Ephesians. And take a moment also to look back through this unit of study, to reflect on some key things that the Lord may be teaching you—and perhaps to highlight and underline these things to review again in the future.