

6. Does God want us to be angry? What guidelines are given on how to deal with anger?
7. What is the remedy for a thief's sickness?
8. In what context does Paul say we should not "grieve the Holy Spirit of God"?
9. What is the difference between wrath and anger?
10. What are some specific ways in which Christians can "be kind to one another"? Name some instances in which you have received such acts of kindness.
11. How can we learn to be more forgiving?

Lesson Ten (5:1-20)

Walk in Love (5:1-5)

1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

3 But immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is fitting among saints. 4 Let there be no filthiness, nor silly talk, nor lewdness, which are not fitting; but instead let there be thanksgiving. 5 Be sure of this, that no immoral or impure man, or one who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

As we put on the new nature of Christ we become imitators of God, children who resemble their father. Our way of life is in harmony with the nature of God. We walk in love, in light, and in wisdom—three of God's greatest characteristics.

V. 1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children—The word "therefore" points back to the preceding verses, especially verses 22 through 24. Being "imitators of God" is a natural consequence of

putting on the nature of Christ and being re-created in God's likeness. Although we are only "adopted" children (Eph. 1:5; Gal. 4:5), God's Spirit makes it possible to resemble our new Father!

V. 2 And walk in love—God is love (1 John 4:8), so we who would be like him must walk in love. Love means we give more than we take; we help more than we hurt. It means we care more about others' needs than our own wants. (See Eph. 2:4.)

God never asks us to do anything he was unwilling to do himself. He pioneered the way of forgiveness in the preceding verses, and Christ pioneered the way of love in this verse. Our duty is to "walk and keep on walking" (Greek present tense) in the way which God has pioneered.

as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us—These words are strongly suggestive of the Old Testament sacrificial system. The word "sacrifice" and the verb form of "offering" each appear over 70 times in the book of Leviticus alone. (See especially Lev. 1:13.) Christ is the fulfillment of these sacrifices, making complete and final atonement by his single offering at Calvary (Heb. 9:28; 10:12). This was the ultimate and only sacrifice God truly desired (Heb. 10:5).

V. 3 But immorality and all impurity or covetousness—If we walk in love, certain vices must necessarily be put out of our lives. "Immorality," or fornication, refers to general sexual promiscuity. It includes any sexual intercourse outside of marriage. "Impurity," or uncleanness, is any defilement that makes one unfit to come before the presence of God. "Covetousness" means literally "have-more-ness." It is the desire to have more and more and more. Perhaps the clearest English equivalent is simply "greed."

must not even be named among you, as is fitting among saints—In what way are these sins not even to be "named"? Perhaps it means that the saints should live in such a way that no one could charge them with these sins. More likely, in my judgement, it means that these sins are so unholy that they should not even be mentioned at all. They are unfit for the minds of the saints to dwell on, or the tongues of the saints to name.

Remember that "saints" are simply those who are "set apart" to God (Eph. 1:1) as Christians.

V. 4 Let there be no filthiness, nor silly talk, nor lewdness—"Filthiness" is the common Greek word meaning "shameful," and is applied here to our speech. Dirty, disgusting, obscene language is not appropriate to our new nature. "Silly talk" is literally "fool's talk." Remember that in the Bible the "fool" not only lacks wisdom, but also lacks knowledge of God (Psalm 14:1). "Lewdness" is closely related to silly talk. It refers to

coarse jesting and sacrilegious speech. Aristotle called it “cultured insolence.”

God is not opposed to all fun and joking. His approval of merriment, laughter and happiness is seen in Proverbs 17:22, “A merry heart is good medicine.” The disapproval of this verse applies to ribaldry, flippancy, and ridiculing talk. Light and irreverent talk about sacred things should especially be avoided.

but instead let there be thanksgiving—God always has a positive virtue to replace a negative vice. The lips engaged in frequent thanksgiving will be less likely to say disgraceful things. (See Col. 2:7; 3:16, 17; 4:2.)

v. 5 Be sure of this, that no immoral or impure man—The same vices named in verse three are repeated here. Paul is emphatic about their consequences: “Be sure of this!”

or one who is covetous (that is, an idolater)—What has covetousness to do with idolatry? This is the answer. The people of ancient times sensed the reality of supernatural power controlling the forces of nature. They created idols to visualize and localize this power so they could worship it and get it to work for them. The most important of the idols were fertility gods. To get on the good side of a fertility god would insure good crops, fat flocks, and many sons. The people worshipped idols for what they could get from their power. Thus, idolatry and greed are very closely linked. (See Col. 3:5.)

has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God—One cannot reject the lifestyle of the new nature and still have a share in the Lord’s kingdom. This kingdom has already come in one sense, as the church. The ultimate reality of this kingdom will be heaven. The immoral, impure, and greedy have no share in either.

Walk in Light (5:6-14)

6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for it is because of these things that the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not associate with them, 8 for once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true); 10 and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. 11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. 12 For it is a shame even to speak of the things that they do in secret; 13 but when anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it is said,

“Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.”

V. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words—Certain false teachers in Asia Minor were trying to pervert what God had said, using philosophy and empty deceit (Col. 2:8). They used clever arguments and half-truths to justify what God had condemned. Every generation must be on guard against “new” moralities and situation ethics.

the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience—God’s wrath is mentioned over thirty times in the New Testament. Despite this fact, many people have difficulty believing that the same God who wants to save men is also willing to punish them. Wrath is not sin in God, because he alone can exercise it righteously. The “sons of disobedience,” that is, all people who disobey God, deserve his wrath. God’s severity and God’s salvation are opposite sides of the same coin.

“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him” (John 3:36).

V. 7 Therefore do not associate with them—The Greek word used here for “associate” means to “partake together” with someone as a partner. The only other use of the word in the New Testament is Eph. 3:6, where the Gentile Christians are fellow partakers of any nationality, but we must refuse to recognize partnership with those who claim to be Christians, but totally reject the Christian life. Paul makes this very clear in 1 Cor. 5:9-11.

V. 8 for once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord—Jesus came to give light to those who sit in darkness (Luke 1:78-79; Matt. 4:16). Because he is the light of the world (John 8:12), his presence in the lives of his disciples makes them become lights (Matt. 5:14-16). Where once their lives were full of sin’s darkness and gloom, now they radiate spiritual vitality, purity, and light.

walk as children of light—The simplest way to put it is this: “Be what you are!” The Lord has cleansed us and made us lights, so we should start living up to that role. We must shine as lights in the world, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (Phil. 2:15).

V. 9 (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true)—The farmer expects his fields to grow what he has planted in them. Likewise, the Lord has put his light in us and expects us to see an appropriate harvest. Light produces fruit that is good and right and true.

V. 10 and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord—“Try to learn” comes from a Greek word meaning to test or examine in order to approve what is

genuine. It was often used of the tests to prove the gold content of ore.

In the New Testament this word means more than just finding out the value of something. It also involves active participation in what is found to be good. Paul used the same word in Rom. 12:2 where we are transformed **in order to prove out in our own lives** the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

The Christian should try to find out and practice those things which please the Lord. As a child growing from infancy to maturity, he should be motivated less and less by the necessity of doing what is demanded, while wanting more and more to do what is pleasing to his Father. The mature son chooses what he will do on the basis of love, not on the basis of fear (1 John 4:18).

V. 11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness—The Christian should avoid the works of darkness because they are unpleasing to God and because they are profitless. This part of the verse says what is obvious; the next part of the verse carries a surprise.

but instead expose them—Human nature says, “Don’t get involved”; Paul says, “Expose those works of darkness.” Our society, influenced by the criminal element, considers it a dishonorable thing to “squeal,” to “rat,” or to “fink” on a wrong-doer, because that would make you a “stool pigeon.” When students see cheating or when employees see pilfering, usually nothing is said.

The word “expose” also means to reprove, to correct, to point something out to someone. The place to begin, especially if the offender is a Christian brother, is with the offender himself. If this does not bring satisfaction, it will be necessary to take it to higher authorities (see Matt. 18:15-17).

Correcting an erring brother can be tricky business, but the Lord says it is business that needs to be taken care of. (See Gal. 6:1-2). Two pitfalls need to be avoided:

1. One must guard against self-righteousness, which may cause one to become a self-appointed committee of one to point out everyone else’s faults.
2. One must guard against the desire to see someone else get in trouble. It is against this smirking satisfaction we are guarding when we try to teach our children not to be “tattle-tales.”

Correction must be done with the best interest of the offender in mind. It is to his advantage to root out the works of darkness.

V. 12 For it is a shame even to speak of the things that they do in secret—It is not healthy for the

mind to dwell on all the wickedness of the world. It is interesting that even the sinners try not to think about what they do, and try to do it secretly. Those whose deeds are evil love the darkness (John 3:19).

V. 13 But when anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible—Roaches, rats, and rotten people seem to love the darkness. If you turn on the light suddenly in dark places, they become visible and scurry for a hiding place.

for anything that becomes visible is light—The Lord wants to do more than just make the rodents of the world uncomfortable. Jesus wants his light to shine upon sinners in such a way that they are exposed, shamed, cleansed, and renewed. The light of Christ is unique in this sense, for it can turn the object upon which it shines into light.

Thus, the ultimate goal of using the light to “expose” the darkness is to save men from their wickedness.

Therefore it is said—What Paul is quoting here is not known. He may have been paraphrasing certain Old Testament passages, such as Isa. 9:2; 26:19; 51:17; and 60:1. He may have been quoting a baptismal formula recited by the early church. Apparently it was a saying familiar to his first century readers, and thus a suitable illustration of his point.

“Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead—Sinners sleep in the land of spiritual death. This is a call to salvation—to act before it is too late.

and Christ shall give you light—Christ is the only source of true light for those who sleep in darkness. He alone can call them forth into his glorious light. Since they come to him for that light, they should plan to walk in it.

Walk in Wisdom (5:15-20)

15 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, 16 making the most of the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, 20 always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.

V. 15 Look carefully then how you walk—The Christian must “watch accurately” how he walks. His service for the King is far too important to be taken casually. His lifestyle must be consistent with the way of life and light.

The present tense of both verbs indicates the continuing aspect of this command. “Watch and keep on watching how you are continually walking.”

not as unwise men but as wise—Wisdom is the practical insight into what life is all about. It is the ability to see things as God sees them. We get wisdom through Christian teaching (Col. 1:28) and through the revelation of God (Eph. 1:9; James 1:5) in Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:30).

V. 16 making the most of time—Also translated “redeeming the time,” this phrase means “buying up a precious commodity.” Time is one of our most valuable assets, because we never know how much of it we have left, and because once it has passed by it can never be regained.

The word used here for “time” refers not to the length of time, but the special appropriateness of the occasion.

because the days are evil—The distress of the times made the days “evil.” The emphasis is not so much on moral degeneracy, as on the coming perils of persecution. He who walks in wisdom will work while he still can, for “night comes, when no man can work” (John 9:4).

V. 17 Therefore do not be foolish—The foolish person lets opportunities slip past, not knowing their importance, or not caring about their consequences. The wise Christian will understand God’s will (as also in verse 10) and make full use of every opportunity to serve.

V. 18 And do not get drunk with wine—One of the most foolish ways to waste opportunities is drunkenness. Even the Greek and Roman pagans knew drunkenness to be wrong, although they sometimes practiced it. The usual practice throughout the Mediterranean world was to dilute their natural wine with three or four parts water. This made the water more free of impurities and the wine more free from intoxication. The Bible is consistent in its warnings against intoxication (See Prov. 20:1; 23:29-35; Gal. 5:21; 1 Tim. 3:3, 8).

for that is debauchery—Debauchery is living one’s life in dissipation and profligacy. It is the total wasting of one’s life and the rejecting of one’s responsibilities and potential.

but be filled with the Spirit—Life in the Spirit is the opposite of the selfish, worthless life of debauchery. While wine brings out the worst in man, the Spirit brings out the best. The present tense of “be filled” shows that it does not happen all at once, but is a progressive action.

If the Christian is to let his fullness come from the Holy Spirit, he must stop filling his life with other

things. The Spirit cannot fill the man whose satisfaction in life is coming from other sources.

The context has nothing to do with the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, as in 1 Cor. 12. The meaning of “be filled with the Spirit” is determined by the following verses, which are part of the same sentence.

V. 19 addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs—One way in which the Spirit-filled Christian shares his joy in Christ is through singing. “Psalms” are the songs of the Old Testament we know as the book of Psalms. “Hymns” are songs of praise to God, perhaps composed by the Christians themselves. “Spiritual songs” are much the same, although possibly given spontaneously as a gift of the Spirit (1 Cor. 14:15).

singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart—This very lovely verse of scriptures has been the battleground for a fierce sectarian warfare. The point of the contention has been whether “making melody” (Gk. *psallo*) authorizes the use of musical instruments or not. The word *psallo* originally meant “to pluck,” then later “to play a stringed instrument,” then “to sing with stringed accompaniment,” and finally just “to sing.” Some Greek dictionaries say accompaniment was included in the word in the first century; others do not. Until such a time as the battle can be waged in a spirit of Christian brotherhood, I respectfully withdraw from the contest.

V. 20 always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father—The Spirit-filled life is a life filled with thanksgiving. Because our joy does not depend upon outside circumstances, we can always be rejoicing in the Lord and giving thanks (Phil. 4:4-6; 1 Thess. 5:16-18). Our prayers are offered in the name of Jesus, who has made it possible for us to be thankful.

Study Questions

1. How do we become God’s children? Are we born or adopted into the family?
2. Where should we draw the line on joking and levity?
3. What is the connections between covetousness and idolatry?

4. Have you ever heard someone using deceitful and empty words to justify wickedness, and play down the wrath of God?
5. What does it mean to walk in the light? (See also 1 John 1:7.)
6. How should we expose the unfruitful works of darkness?
7. How do we “redeem” the time?
8. Can you draw an analogy between wine and the Spirit in the way they affect a person—the way he talks, the way he thinks, etc.?
9. How do you obey the command to be “filled with the Spirit”?
10. Compared with other world religions Christianity has much more joyful singing. Why is this?
11. Is it possible to give thanks for everything? Even for heartaches and tragedies?

Lesson Eleven (5:21-33)

Husbands, Wives, and Jesus (5:21-27)

21 Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. 22 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. 25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with

the word, 27 that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

God cares about your family. It was God who instituted the human family in the first place, and it is God who best knows how it should operate. In an age when pressures against marriage and the family are mounting, it is both refreshing and strengthening to turn to the instructions from the family’s Designer. If the wisdom of the Designer seems to be out of step with the current wisdom of our time, you will have to judge for yourself whom to follow.

V. 21 Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ—This command is another part of being filled with the Spirit. The construction of the Greek sentence, beginning in verse 18, can be summarized this way:

Be filled with the Spirit—

Addressing one another in psalms, hymns, songs,

Singing and making melody,

Giving thanks always,

Being subject to one another.

“Be subject” was a military term meaning “to be arranged under the authority of someone.” In the context of this verse, it means that every Christian should be ready to surrender his own rights to his brother. He should have such lowliness and meekness (Eph. 4:2) that he prefers his brother’s well-being and wishes (Rom. 12:10).

The motivation for submission is reverence (literally “fear”) of Christ. He is our master; we are all slaves. We have no right to set up our own “pecking order” among slaves. All authority belongs to Christ (Matt. 28:18) and he alone has the right to designate any position of leadership or command.

V. 22 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord—Every family needs someone with the final say. It is God’s plan that this person should be the husband and father. The ultimate reason a wife should submit to her husband is not his proven qualifications for the role of leader, but because God said to submit. (We should always obey God because he is God, not because his request seems reasonable enough!)

A few points need to be made here about the Bible’s teaching on the submission of the wife to the husband. First, notice that the wives are told to be subject; the husbands are not told to put them in subjection. The husband’s responsibility is not to get the upper hand over his wife; his duty is to love her (verse 25). Voluntary submission is the wife’s responsibility. If she is unwilling to assume this role voluntarily, it is