Ephesians Chapter 5 Summary

Walking in Imitation, Walking in Intimacy

# Introduction

## Chapter 5 is Inspired, the Numbering is Not

We need to remember that the chapter and verse numbers we see for chapter 5 are not inspired. There is no reason to jump into five and divorce it from chapter 4. In fact, the beginning of chapter 5 (verses 1, 2) is part of a longer thought between chapter 4:1 and 6:9. Paul’s theme for this section of Ephesians is that your position (Ephesians 2:5-6) should impact our condition.

## Position Before Condition

As Paul writes His letter he is appropriating what he wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:16-17: he is teaching, reproving, correcting, and training in righteousness. His first part of the letter taught doctrinal truth, the second part began reproving and correcting, and training in righteousness. The saints in Ephesus were to understand the truth they were to walk in based on position, so that their condition would have something to operate in alignment with.

As we see the teaching about application come up in the second half of the letter we need to see that it is in relationship to our position.

## Old Testament Principles of Walking

Paul mentions walking 7 times throughout Ephesians (2:10, 4:1, 4:17 [2x], 5:2, 5:8, 5:15), and it isn’t about getting steps on your pedometer! The Old Testament Law used the term specifically to draw attention to day to day living. Since the average person was going to be walking between tasks all day long what you did while you were walking was viewed as how you lived your life and spent your time thinking.

* Walking in God’s Ways – Ex. 16:4, 18:20; Lev. 18:3, 26:3; Deut. 5:33, 8:6, 10:12, 13:5, 19:9, 26:17, 28:9, 30:16; Josh. 22:5; Judges 2:22; 1 Kings 2:4, 3:14; Psalm 86:11
* Walking as *Taught* Daily Interaction – Deut. 6:7, 11:19; Psalm 1:1, 89:30, 119:3, 119:45,
* Walking Leads to Blessing – Deut. 11:22-25;
* The Messiah’s Walk – 1 Sam. 2:35;

Paul’s emphasis on the day to day was to remove focus on the specifics of accidental sin, but to focus on the thoughts and actions as they were related to our relationship with God the Father, through Christ the Son, directed by the Holy Spirit.

# Walking Like God, In Love

## Be Imitators or God as Children (vs. 1-2)

Paul knew his audience in Ephesus, and he himself was nearly caught in a riot while trying to preach the gospel near the theater in Ephesus (c.f. Acts 19:29-31). Their understanding of mimicry up front might be around theatrics, but Paul hit them up with the second half of the phrase: as Children. Children are watching their parents, learning, observing, and following their lead.

The gentile readers of Paul’s letter would need to be taught about God as the God of the Old Testament – whose ways are recorded throughout it – would have no idea the rich personage that the Trinity has. They would need to be taught about God’s ways and God’s character in stark and powerful contrast to the pagan mythology.

The Jewish readers would need to be taught how to understand God’s walk the context of grace because they had been raised in Mosaic legalism without understanding the Law’s purpose to separate them from their surrounding nations and for blessing.

## Walk in Love like Christ

Paul’s second correlation between the believer’s walk and God’s walk is the very walk of Christ, who was an example of walking like God [because He was God]. Jesus was a “love walker,” His very nature reflected God’s love, and His very life was given in love. Paul has already emphasized the love of Christ being worked out in the body in chapter 3 (vs. 3:17-19), and he is reinforcing this concept here.

Christ walked out a life that was directed by the Father, informed by the Spirit, and His will aligned with the Father’s. As believers we walk similarly (without the benefit of the virgin birth), and interact with the Trinity, empowered to love.

## Do Not Imitate Unrighteousness (vs. 3-6)

Paul instructs the believer to not be participating in unrighteousness as they don’t line up with the idea of following God’s pattern and our position. Paul’s specifics, as given here, cross a spectrum of behaviors, but they do not reflect the character of God (v. 1), the love of Christ (v. 2), or the kinds of things the Holy Spirit would lead us to do (v. 18). Instead we should see thankfulness (v. 4) as it is reflective of understanding God’s sovereignty, God’s provision, and God’s working all things for the good (c.f. Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 2:10).

# The Contrasts of Light vs. Dark

There are 3 concepts that are emphasized in this section: partaking (v. 7), participating/fellowshipping (v. 11), and being (vs. 15,18, 21). The stark contrast is between these patterns and being filled and fulfilled by the Holy Spirit. We notice that there is a similar pattern in Psalm 1:1: Don’t walk, stand or sit with those who are wicked.

## Do Not Partake (vs. 7-10)

Paul warns that believers should not be partnering (partaking) with those who deceive with empty words (v. 6). In the Greek the idea for these deceivers with “empty words” is literally those who are empty vessels containing nothing. Their deception is an illusion of substance, but inside there is nothing. We now understand what substance is; we know what light is in contrast to the darkness of the flesh. Our walk – which is already imitating God’s character, and Christ’s love – should be that of light.

1 John 1:7 tells us, “but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

Since we are no longer in darkness, we need to be living out the light-based life of Christ. Not by our own strength, but by aligning our will with that of the Holy Spirit as He directs and empowers us.

### Learning What is Pleasing to the Lord

It’s worth noting that as we are being sanctified (AKA growing in our conditional walk) that we need to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. This would have had specific application to Paul’s initial readers, but also hits us where we are today. Jews would have needed to learn how to live a godly life as they eschew the Law of Moses and gentiles would need to learn how to abandon the carnal practices that were culturally normative. Each group would need to found their growth in abiding.

God is pleased not by our actions first, but by our motive: Are we abiding and producing fruit of the Spirit, or are we simply doing what looks right, but from a carnal place?

## Do Not Participate (v.11-16)

The Greek word translated participate here is in the ‘fellowship’ family of words. The idea is that we not only partook, but that we actively involved ourselves, making us not just witnesses, but being identified as advocates of darkness.

### Exposing Darkness (v. 11-14)

Instead of participating in darkness we are to be exposing darkness. Not in gossip, not in condescension (which is not the same as not having judgment), but in restorative correction and evangelistic outreach.

### Walking in Wisdom, Redeeming the Time (v. 15, 16)

In chapter 1:17 Paul’s prayer includes a specific mention that he wanted the Father to give the church a spirit of wisdom. That notion of wisdom is referred to again, here. Wisdom is knowledge applied – and Paul wants us to consider the knowledge of who God is (c.f. 1), who Christ is (c.f. 2), and who we are in Him (c.f. 14) – to determine how our walk should look. This moves from understanding to redeeming the time. The good news is that:

1. We’ve been empowered by the Holy Spirit (c.f. 3:16)
2. We’re having our minds renewed by the Holy Spirit (c.f. 4:23)
3. God has prepared good works for us to do if we’re abiding (c.f. 2:10)
4. We are to be filled and fulfilled by the Holy Spirit

## Do Not Be Foolish, Understand the Will of the Lord (v.17)

The will of the Lord is that we walk in fellowship with Him, resting in grace, as we’re conformed to the image of His Son (c.f. Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 4:11-15; 1 Thessalonians 1:11-12). When we understand that it impacts our thinking, our partaking, our participation, and our being.

## Filled & Fulfilled by the Holy Spirit (v. 18-20)

As believers we see the impact of the darkness in contrast to the light, we see the world’s coping mechanisms as they see no value in pain and suffering, and we respond with a proper understanding of the work of God in our lives. This is practically applied through fellowship with the Father through the Holy Spirit and the Son. We find our value, our sustaining (in contrast to coping), and our life in the Godhead.

### Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs (v. 19a)

The Holy Spirit leads us to edification through teaching – in this case through psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. The average Roman citizen may have been literate, but literacy rates are still significantly higher in today’s first world countries. Using songs as a medium for carrying doctrinal truth ensured that no matter what education you had you could carry the truths with you for meditation.

### Singing & Making Melody with Your Heart to the Lord (v. 19b)

Once the doctrines were shared through song the truths encased in the melodic pieces could be meditated upon, and the outcome would be an internalized rejoicing as a result of those truths.

## Walking in Subjection (v. 21)

A key transition from the previous verses into the last third of the chapter is the idea of subjection that is carried in verse 21. The result of understanding with fear and reverence for who Christ is, should lead us to have an attitude of service and subjection to one another. This level of humility was extremely contrary to the gentile thinking, and frankly was not common amongst the more self-righteous Pharisees (c.f. Matthew 6:5-6).

In light of chapter three’s admonition to learning about love together, the idea of subjection seems extremely relevant. The Holy Spirit will also lead us to in this direction as benevolent love is the fruit of the Spirit (c.f. Galatians 5:22)

# Walking Out the Eternal Relationship of Christ & the Church (vs. 21-33)

The first thing that the reader should spot is that this passage is rooted in the body needing to be subject to one another (verse 21). The founding principle of submission to one another is a reflection of our understanding our subjection to Christ. This is lived out in marriage, broader family relationships, and in the church body.

Subjection of everything to Christ (c.f. 1:21) was given to Him by the Father. In light of that Paul lists specific applications of what this looks like within marriage as analogy paired with this eternal relationship of Christ and the church.

## Parallels Between Christ and the Church & the Marriage Relationship

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| Verse2 | Husbands & Wives | Christ & the Church |
| 22 | Wives to Husbands  | As to the Lord |
| 23 & 24 | Husband is head of the wife | Christ is head of the church; Savior |
| 25 - 27 | Husbands love your wives sacrificially & with Honor | Christ loves the church by sacrificing Himself; Christ set the church aside through the washing of the word; Christ presents the church as wrinkle free, spotless, holy, and blameless |
| 28 - 30 | Husbands love their wives as their own bodies | Christ nourishes the church as His own body |
| 31 & 32 | The Husband and Wife are Separated from their Past relationships; One Flesh | The Body is separated from its old ways unto Christ |
| 33 | Husbands love your wives as yourself; Wives respect your husbands. |  |

The marriage principles presented here are very practical for the marriages of believers. The impact of a husband not ‘conquering’ marriage and moving onto the next challenge (abdicating his responsibilities) is huge. Cherishing, nurturing, and loving sacrificially have to be intentional and should be modeled to the next generation (c.f. Titus 2:1-8). This sort of man is loving above reproach so that the complaints of the secular wife cannot be leveled against this godly man. Similarly, wives are to be respecting their husbands: this principle creates a vacuum if husbands are not leading appropriately [as described above], but it also does so without complaining, whining, nagging or any of the other ways the world describes wives in a negative way.

Paul is emphasizing that we should be seeing our lives in light of our eternal relationship with Christ. We see God as the eternal example (v. 1), Christ as the earthly example (v. 2), the Spirit as the prompter of those examples (v. 18), and our response, in love, as a manifestation of that example to the world around us (vs. 3-33).