



# The Epistle to the Ephesians

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CHAPTER FIVE

# Walk in Love, Light, and Wisdom (5:1-21)

*“Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.”*

## I. IMITATE GOD.

- “*Therefore*” connects with the previous chapter where Paul exhorted the Ephesians to kindness and a spirit of forgiveness, and he now entreats them to imitate God, who is always kind and ready to forgive.
- The root of the original Greek word translated “*imitators*” is the source of the English word “mimic.” Thus, the Ephesians were to mimic God as a child would mimic his earthly father.
  - The love of Christ is unselfish, fully dedicated, sanctifying, and sacrificial (**Eph. 5:22; 1 John 3:16**). We mimic God’s character by mimicking that that love.

# Walk in Love, Light, and Wisdom (5:1-21)

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## I. IMITATE GOD (cont).

- While the words “*offering*” and “*sacrifice*” are somewhat synonymous, “*offering*” seems to be inclusive of the entirety of Christ’s voluntary submission (**Rom. 12:1**) to the Father (His holy life, perfect example, teaching of truth, refraining from sin, as well as atoning death), while “*sacrifice*” specifically and solely refers to the Lord’s death upon the cross (**compare Luke 14:27 with Rev. 2:10**).
- Jesus’s sacrifice on the cross was a “*sweet-smelling aroma*” to God; so too were Old Testament sacrifices (**Gen. 8:21; Exod. 29:18, 25, 41; Lev. 1:9, 13, 17; etc.**).
  - “*Sweet-smelling aroma*” indicates God’s satisfaction with man’s obedience to Him (**Ezek. 20:41-44; Phil. 4:14-18**).
- We must be willing to love as Christ loved and sacrifice ourselves as Christ did in service to God (**Gal. 2:20**). Such mimicry will produce a sweet-smelling aroma to God.

# Walk in Love, Light, and Wisdom (5:1-21)

*“But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.”*

## II. ACTIONS WHICH “ARE NOT FITTING” FOR SAINTS.

- “*Fornication*” – properly, of illicit sexual intercourse in general (Strong).
- “*Uncleanness*” – in a moral sense, the impurity of lustful, luxurious, profligate living (Thayer).
  - Like fornication, this likely refers to sexual impurity (**Rom. 6:19; Gal. 5:19**). The same Greek word is used in **Rom. 1:24** to refer to homosexual relationships.
- “*Covetousness*” – greedy desire to have more, covetousness, avarice (Thayer).
  - Covetousness is idolatry (**Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5**).
  - Contextually, it seems Paul is referring to the lustful and uncontrolled desires in line with the previous two sins.
    - “The covetous man forgets his soul in favor of his desires. He satisfies or gratifies himself at the expense of others. Probably here, Paul had in mind the man who was covetous of a woman he has no right to have. Moses tied covetousness specifically to one’s desire for another man’s wife as well as for his possessions (**Exod. 20:17**)” (Caldwell).

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## II. ACTIONS WHICH “ARE NOT FITTING” FOR SAINTS (cont).

- “*Filthiness*” – obscenity, indecency, baseness (Strong).
  - The Greek word used here only appears this one time in the Bible. Since the next two sins deal with matters of the tongue, it appears “*filthiness*” here refers to obscene speech (sexual innuendos, double-entendres, etc.).
    - “The connection with the words following, and the distinction from those going before, appear to show ... Paul ... is passing from impurity of the inward soul to impurity in outward expression” (Ellicott).
  - “*All filthiness*” and not just filthy speech must be put away by saints (**James 1:21**) because all sin, in whatever form it takes, defiles and corrupts.
- “*Foolish talking*” – literally, “foolish (moronic) words,” i.e. speech flowing out of a dull, sluggish heart (mind) that lost its edge (grip) on reality (HELPS Word-Studies).
  - The Greek word used here only appears this one time in the Bible. The phrase indicates speech that lacks proper thought or care, especially a lack of emphasis on spiritual matters.
  - Speech that flows from our lips without forethought is dangerous (**Matt. 12:36-37, ESV**). Listen to a person talk and you will quickly learn what resides in his heart (**Matt. 12:34b-35**).

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## II. ACTIONS WHICH “ARE NOT FITTING” FOR SAINTS (cont).

- “Coarse jesting” – ribaldry - jesting (Strong).
  - The Greek word used here only appears this one time in the Bible.
  - There is nothing wrong with clean humor (**Ecc. 3:4**). However, jokes can go too far. Additionally, there may be occasions where we are tempted to turn a conversation in a humorous direction that should remain serious.
    - “Properly, the more polished “versatility,” which will find occasion for wit or levity in anything, however sacred, fearing nothing so much as to be dull, and mistaking all seriousness and reserve for dullness” (Ellicott).
  - Coarse jesting (“*crude humor*,” **ESV**) occurs when jokes reference sin in a positive light, contain inappropriate innuendos, or exist at the expense of another person.
    - “A sly question, a smart answer, a shrewd intimation, a clever retort, or a lustful joke can fill the bill when describing this sin” (Caldwell).

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## II. ACTIONS WHICH “ARE NOT FITTING” FOR SAINTS (cont).

- The Ephesians were to avoid each of these sins because they were “*saints*,” such sins are “*not fitting*” their vocation as God’s children. These sins were “*not even be named among*” them.
  - Some contend that Paul is emphasizing that certain sins must not be openly discussed. **Eph. 5:12** teaches this point, I do not believe Paul is emphasizing this same idea here. Instead, Paul stresses how the church should not permit a person who engages in such sins to be counted as faithful among them (**1 Cor. 5**).
    - “That is, let it not exist; let there be no occasion for mentioning such a thing among you; let it be wholly unknown. This cannot mean that it is wrong to ‘mention’ these vices for the purpose of rebuking them, or cautioning those in danger of committing them – for Paul himself in this manner mentions them here, and frequently elsewhere – but that they should not ‘exist’ among them” (Barnes).
  - Sainthood demands that Christians separate themselves from the darkness these sins cast upon their souls to remain light in the world (**2 Cor. 6:14**).
- Rather than engaging in these sins, the proper action that is befitting of saints is “*giving of thanks*” (**Heb. 13:15; Eph. 5:19-20; 1 Thess. 5:18; Col. 3:17; James 5:13**).

# Walk in Love, Light, and Wisdom (5:1-21)

*“For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them.”*

## III. BE NOT DECEIVED.

- Whereas v.1 demands God’s people to imitate Him, Paul warns here that evil attitudes and actions instigate God’s wrath.
  - There is no “*inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God*” for such people, which includes people who have become members of the household of God but allow themselves to get caught up in these sins (**Acts 8:20-23**).
  - These sins bring “*the wrath of God*” upon the “*sons of disobedience*” (**Rom. 1:18; Col. 3:6**), which includes the world (**Eph. 2:2**) and unfaithful Christians (**Eph. 5:6-7; 2 Pet. 2:20-22**).
- The Ephesians were not to “*be partakers*” with the sons of disobedience.
  - It is not only possible for a Christian to lose his soul by committing these sins themselves, but it is also possible for a Christian to lose his soul by partaking in the sins of others (**1 Tim. 5:22; 2 Cor. 6:14-18**).
  - If we partake of someone else’s sins, it is only logical that we also partake in their punishment (**Rom. 1:28-32**).

# Walk in Love, Light, and Wisdom (5:1-21)

*“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.”*

## IV. ONCE DARKNESS BUT NOW LIGHT.

- A change is demanded when surrendering to the Lord (1 Cor. 6:11), who is the source of all light (Eph. 5:14; John 8:12).
- Those who walk in darkness become darkness themselves (“*you were ... darkness*”); darkness consumes (Matt. 6:22-23).
- All children of God are transferred from darkness to light (1 Pet. 2:9; Acts 26:15-18).
  - Christians are to radiate the light of Christ and bring light to the world (Matt. 15:14-16; Phil. 2:15).
  - Christians must walk in accordance with what provides light – the word of God (Psalm 119:105).
  - Christians must continually walk in the light and not fall back into darkness (1 John 1:5-10).
    - All Christians occasionally refrain from submitting to darkness. The key is recognizing when we do fail so we can repent and confess those failures to God. All people sin (1 John 1:8; Rom. 3:23), but all people – Christian and non-Christian alike – must repent of their sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30-31) and confess them to God (1 John 1:9).

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## IV. ONCE DARKNESS BUT NOW LIGHT (cont).

- Children of light are called to produce the “*fruit of the Spirit*” (“*fruit of the light*” **ASV, NASB, RSV**).
  - “*Goodness*” – uprightness of heart and life ... kindness, beneficence (Thayer).
    - Goodness centers in the heart and is based on God’s standard of goodness (2 Thess. 1:11; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).
  - “*Righteousness*” – integrity, virtue, purity of life, uprightness, correctness in thinking, feeling, and acting (Strong).
    - Righteousness is the product of goodness. Whereas goodness centers in the heart, righteousness is seen in our actions. What is right and righteous is ultimately determined by God (**Psalm 119:172**).
  - “*Truth*” – truth, but not merely truth as spoken; truth of idea, reality, sincerity, truth in the moral sphere, divine truth revealed to man, straightforwardness (Strong).
    - Truth centers in our minds and is conveyed by both our words and actions. Like goodness and righteousness, truth is determined by God (**John 17:17**).
    - “Truth is the harmony of the inward and the outward – correspondence of what the man is in himself with which he appears to be. Now, it is only children of light, only men thoroughly good and upright who can, in this sense, be men of truth” (Lipscomb).

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## IV. ONCE DARKNESS BUT NOW LIGHT (cont).

- When Christians “*walk as children of light*” by allowing God’s goodness to rest in their hearts, the righteousness of God to abound in their actions, and the truth of God to live in our minds and be evident in our speech and actions, their lives “*prove*” (**KJV, ASV**) – or serve as examples of – “*what is acceptable to the Lord.*”
- Children of light always test and discern they see and hear presented as good, righteous, and true with the scriptures to determine what is acceptable to the Lord (**Eph. 5:17; 1 Thess. 5:21; Acts 17:11; Rom. 12:2**).

# Walk in Love, Light, and Wisdom (5:1-21)

*“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.”*

## V. HOW CHILDREN OF LIGHT VIEW DARKNESS.

- The works of darkness are “*unfruitful*.” The only fruit darkness produces is death (**Rom. 6:21-23**).
  - “The metaphor is striking, but literally correct, inasmuch as light is the necessary condition of that vegetative life which grows and yields fruit, while darkness is the destruction, if not of life, at any rate of fruit-bearing perfection” (Ellicott).
- Light and darkness are completely incompatible (**2 Cor. 6:14**).
  - Children of light must not be in fellowship with children of darkness; they must be separate (**2 Cor. 6:17**); this includes Christians among us who have been swayed back into darkness (**1 Cor. 5:1, 13**).
  - When children of light remain in fellowship with darkness, they are at risk of being consumed by it (**1 Cor. 5:6**).
- Christians must “*expose*” (“*reprove*,” KJV) darkness, even sins that are hidden in secret (**1 Cor. 5:4-5; Luke 3:18-20; Mark 6:17-18**).
  - Such reproof spoken in love (**Eph. 4:15**) is necessary to hopefully convert children of darkness into becoming children of light.

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## V. HOW CHILDREN OF LIGHT VIEW DARKNESS (cont).

- There is no joy within children of light to speak about the evil works of darkness, especially those things that are so heinous that even the child of darkness keeps them hidden *“in secret.”*
  - The problem, of course, is nothing is hidden from God (**Heb. 4:13**); that which is hidden will be shown to be sinful (**John 3:19-21**).
- The specific details of certain sins done in secret are, in some senses, shameful to speak of publicly but must still be rebuked in such a way to discourage others from falling into the pit of such darkness. Wisdom and discretion must be used to recognize what is appropriate to openly discuss or leave unmentioned when speaking about certain sins since discussing all the “dirty details” can serve as a stumbling block to some people trying to walk in the light.
  - “Sin may be plainly indicated, and perhaps most effectually branded, without polluting the tongue by describing its actual developments” (Ellicott).

# Walk in Love, Light, and Wisdom (5:1-21)

*“Therefore He says: ‘Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.’”*

## VI. LIFE THROUGH LIGHT.

- Compare what Paul says here with Isa. 9:2, 51:17, 52:1, 60:1.
  - Just as Israel was called to awake from its previous state of darkness and death, all people are called to rise from their slumber through the light provided by Christ (Rom. 13:11; 1 Thess. 5:6; Eph 2:1).
- Based upon all that is wrong with the works of darkness, Christians must “*therefore*” remain vigilant and stay spiritually “*awake*,” not being deceived into practicing the sinful things mentioned previously (Rom. 13:11-12; 1 Cor. 15:34).
- Children of light are people who have risen “*from the dead*” and come out of their lives of sin and darkness (Rom. 6:13).
- Christ is the source of light (John 8:12). Being “*light in the Lord*” (Eph. 5:8) is only possible upon awaking and arising from the dead.

# Walk in Love, Light, and Wisdom (5:1-21)

*“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”*

## VII. WALK WISELY, REDEEMING THE TIME.

- “*Circumspectly*” – doing something with precision and attention to detail. It implies a thoroughness and carefulness in action or thought (**Strong**).
- We must be careful how we walk (**Heb. 12:15**).
  - “Like the aerialist on a high wire, the child of God watches his step with precision” (Caldwell).
- The Ephesians’ former life was unwise and foolish because it displayed a clear lack of understanding of the will of God (**Eph. 4:17-24**).
  - To lack concern for the will of God is unwise and foolish (**Psalms 14:1; Prov. 1:7, 2:6, 9:10; James 1:5**).
- To walk circumspectly and in wisdom, we must walk with the Spirit (**Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:16, 25; Col. 3:16**).
- It is not enough to know the will of the Lord, we must “*understand*” it, indicating obedience (**Job 28:28; Matt. 13:18-23**).

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## VII. WALK WISELY, REDEEMING THE TIME (cont).

- “*Time*” must be redeemed.
  - “*Redeeming*” – to buy up for oneself, for one's use (Thayer).
- The original Greek word here is not indicative of chronological time [*chronos*] but indicates opportunities [*kairos*] (see 2 Tim. 4:2).
  - “*Time*” – opportune or seasonable time: with verbs suggestive of the idea of advantage (Thayer).
    - We must take advantage of the time (opportunities) God presents to us (Col. 4:5; Gal. 6:10).
    - Recognizing the evil times in which we live (Gal. 1:4), we must walk carefully lest we become devoured by the source of evil (1 Pet. 5:8).
- “*Evil days*” can reduce our opportunities to do good, so we must take advantage of every opportunity to do the Lord's will when those opportunities are presented to us (Prov. 27:1; James 4:13-17). When opportunities to do good arise, we must redeem those times!

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## VII. WALK WISELY, REDEEMING THE TIME (cont).

- The Greek verb form here indicates the process of getting drunk, not just the final state of drunkenness.
  - “To intoxicate, make drunk; passive . . . to get drunk, become intoxicated” (Thayer).
  - “To make drunk, an inceptive verb that begins the process of the state expressed in methuo (3184), to drink to intoxication” (Vine).
  - “To intoxicate, make drunk . . . The verb ‘methuskó’ is used in the New Testament to describe the act of making someone drunk or intoxicated. It often carries a negative connotation, warning against excessive drinking and the loss of self-control that accompanies drunkenness. The term is used both literally, in the context of physical intoxication, and metaphorically, to describe spiritual or moral stupor” (Strong).
- More literally, Paul says, “Do not even begin the process of becoming drunk or softened by alcohol.” Wise children of God who are walking in the light must abstain from initiating the process of dulling our senses via intoxicating alcohol (1 Pet. 4:3; Luke 12:45-46; Prov. 23:29-33).

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## VII. WALK WISELY, REDEEMING THE TIME (cont).

- Rather than being filled with spirits, wise people walking in the light fill themselves with the Holy Spirit.
- Christians are “filled with the Spirit” when they are filled with the knowledge of His will (Col. 1:9, 3:16).
  - Just as the drunkard liberally fills himself with intoxicating spirits, Christians must liberally fill themselves with the Holy Spirit by heeding the words He has spoken.

# Walk in Subjection and Love (5:22-33)

*“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.”*

## II. HUSBANDS, LOVE YOUR WIVES.

- Husbands are commanded to love their wives “*just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for her*” (see also Col. 3:19).
- A husband must mirror Christ’s **sacrificial** love.
  - This love is sacrificial in the sense of being willing to die for the other person, but also in the sense of the husband placing his wife’s happiness, well-being, and interests ahead of his own (1 Cor. 13:5).
- A husband must mirror Christ’s **sanctifying** and purifying love.
  - Christ provides sanctification and cleansing for the church through “*the washing of water by the word*” (Tit. 3:5; John 17:17; 1 Pet. 1:22-23). A man’s relationship with his wife must also be a sanctifying and purifying relationship. No one desires to defile something he loves.

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## II. HUSBANDS, LOVE YOUR WIVES (cont).

- A husband must mirror Christ’s **caring, supportive, and provisional** love.
  - A husband must treat his wife as much more than a cook, sex partner, grocery shopper, maid, etc. He must “*nourish and cherish*” her.
    - To “*nourish*” means a plentiful supply is provided. Husbands should plentifully supply the needs, support, consideration, happiness, love, and spiritual welfare of their wife (**S. of Sol. 7:10**).
    - Husbands must “*cherish*” their wives, meaning foster with a tender and sincere care.
- A husband must mirror Christ’s **unbreakable** love (**Rom. 8:38-39**).
  - When a man and woman scripturally marry, the couple is joined (or glued) together in a bond established by God (**Matt. 19:6**). A husband and wife must be committed to ensuring that nothing and no one ever causes that glue to dissolve.

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## II. HUSBANDS, LOVE YOUR WIVES (cont).

- The word translated “*ought*” indicates that the husband is indebted to his wife to love her in this way; such love is due her.
- Due to the church being sacred, divine, and spiritual in nature, one day the church will be presented to Christ without “*spot*,” “*wrinkle*,” and “*blemish*.”
- How can a husband and wife mirror the relationship between Christ and His church in presenting themselves without “*spot*,” “*wrinkle*,” and “*blemish*?”
  - Recognize the sanctity of marriage and enter it with special care and forethought (Matt. 19:8; 1 Cor. 7:10-11).
  - Recognize marriage is divine in its construction and purpose (Gen. 2:18; Gen. 1:28; Heb. 13:4, RSV).
  - Recognize and cultivate your spiritual bond (1 Pet. 3:7).

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## II. HUSBANDS, LOVE YOUR WIVES (cont).

- The Lord cares for His body (*“the church”*). So too should a husband take special care of what has become part of his bones and flesh (**Gen. 2:23**).

# Walk in Subjection and Love (5:22-33)

*“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”*

## III. THE “ONE FLESH” RELATIONSHIP.

- Paul states that marriage results in a husband and wife becoming “*joined*” together.

**NOTE** The terms “*joined*,” “*bound*,” and “*married*” are not synonymous.

- “*Bound*” is not the same as “*married*” (see Rom. 7:2-3).
- “*Joined*” is not the same as “*bound*” (see Rom. 7:2-3; Matt. 19:6).
- “*Married*” is not the same as “*joined*” (see 1 Cor. 6:16; Matt. 19:6).
- Echoing the sentiments of Christ during His ministry and God in the beginning (Matt. 19:4-6; Gen. 2:24), Paul says, in marriage, a husband and wife become “*one flesh*.”
  - Undoubtedly, a husband and wife should share oneness of mind, purpose, and dedication to each other and to God, but by referencing a husband and wife being “*joined*” together in “*one flesh*,” Paul is here simply alluding to the conjugal relationship (1 Cor 6:16-18; Gen. 2:24).

# Walk in Subjection and Love (5:22-33)

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## IV. A CLOSING ADMONITION ON MARRIAGE.

- While revealing God’s divine plan for marriage, Paul is really discussing the relationship between the Lord and His body. This “*mystery*” is what Paul is revealing in this text.
- “*Nevertheless*” shows that although the primary application of Paul’s teachings here are directed towards Christ’s relationship with His church, this teaching should be practically applied within the marital relationship by the husband loving his wife and the wife respecting her husband.
  - Husbands and wives must respect God’s will concerning marriage, thereby showing love and respect for each other.
  - Each person should work daily to manifest the type of character that makes it easier for their spouse to love and respect.