

DONALD J. WILLS  
SENIOR PASTOR

APRIL  
2019

# COMMUNITY

IT'S TIME



ADULT CONNECT  
CLASS CURRICULUM



The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to **introduce** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, **instruct** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, **inspire** them to serve for God's kingdom, and **incorporate** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

## *A Note From Our Pastor*

Dear FBC family and friends,

This month our church community is stepping into new territory with construction on the Sanctuary. The lessons this month give insight into how we can successfully grow our community while in transition from the Sanctuary to the Gym. The keys to this success are the “Walk” and “Witness” of our community during this phase. We are confident that God has led us this direction and this is the “will of the Lord” for our community. It is very important that Christ and His kingdom stay the central focus of the ministry. Let us “walk” worthy of our calling and continue to “witness” while inviting people outside our community to join us.

As a reminder, the layout of this Curriculum begins with a 7-day approach for both the teacher and the members to get the most from each study. We also acknowledge that teachers may have their own methods for preparing the lessons and we encourage them to prepare in the way that makes them most effective in presenting God’s Word and the weekly lesson. We also encourage each teacher and member to use the suggested 7-day approach for their own personal study and encouragement.

Thank you church family for your faithfulness in giving, serving, and telling others the good news of the gospel. During this time, we have an opportunity to do something extraordinary for Christ and contribute to the success of the ministry. Keep praying and working for His Glory!

-Blessings  
Pastor Don



## *Suggested Plan for Using this Bible Study Guide Effectively*

### *Introduce*

**Day 1:** Read and meditate on the Scripture, asking God to guide you throughout the week as you study His Word and allowing Him to speak to you through the Spirit. Read the **INTRODUCE** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Instruct*

**Day 2:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and read the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary. Concentrate on memorizing the focal verse for that particular week.

**Day 3:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and answer the focal questions in the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Inspire*

**Day 4:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and begin thinking about tangible ways you can incorporate the principles you learned in your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Incorporate*

**Day 5:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and apply the theological principle that you learned from this week in a tangible way. Use the **INCORPORATE** portion of the lesson commentary to guide you.

**Day 6:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and in the journal section describe how God allowed you to apply this passage in a real and tangible way this week.

**Day 7:** Review the Scripture and share with others in your Connect Class on Sunday morning at 9:30am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.



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*April 7, 2019*



# *The Walk of the Community*

## *Ephesians 5:1-6*

Focal Verse:

“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.”

Ephesians 5:2

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## Introduce

Dressed in his best suit, Harvey T. Hypocrite sat in the worship service constantly looking at his watch and wondering when it would end so that he could get home and watch the game. When the service ended, he made a beeline for the parking lot, where he herded his family into the car and pulled onto the access road with a blaze of speed unrivaled by the fastest race car driver.

As he began to merge onto the freeway, he found the motorist in front of him going much too slow for his taste, so he began honking and shaking his fist in the air. While passing the motorist, he rolled down his window and



shouted, “Get off the road and quit driving like it’s Sunday!” He then cut in front of the motorist so closely that the driver couldn’t have missed the church’s sticker displayed prominently on his bumper.

Upon arriving at his favorite restaurant, Harvey began frantically looking for his bulletin because they gave 10% off to customers who brought in their church’s current order of service. In a hurry to order, he immediately reprimanded the waiter for waiting too long and being too inattentive for his liking. As he ordered, he spoke loudly and to the point, but rushed through the details so that the waiter couldn’t catch everything. Being asked to repeat parts of his order infuriated Harvey T. Hypocrite; he began to mumble under his breath, but audibly, so the waiter could still hear all the insults. Although the waiter had done his best to please the Hypocrite family, nothing was ever right and the complaints flowed freely throughout the meal. Harvey continued to talk about how inept and incapable the restaurant employees had become—even once banging his hand on the table to jar all the dishes as he demanded to speak to the manager.

Finally, the bill came, but it didn’t have the 10% discount included, so he began making a scene by waving the bulletin in the air emphatically. He bellowed, “I took time to bring this in and you can’t even get one thing right on my meal! Why did I go through all this for a terrible meal and horrendous service?!” Apologetic, the waiter rushed to take the bill and correct everything, but this still didn’t satisfy Harvey. In the back of his

## Introduce

mind, he thought that he would show the waiter how unimpressed he was, so he didn't leave any tip—only an insulting note on the signed copy of the bill. That day Harvey acted worse than any other patron in the restaurant—including many who didn't go to church and had no relationship with Christ.

In [Ephesians 5:1-6](#), Paul clearly instructs us to imitate God and conduct ourselves in love just as Jesus Christ showed love to us and sacrificially gave Himself for us on the cross, so that we might have eternal life. As followers of Christ, we must live lives that markedly differ from the world; the secular world ought to see a difference in our walk: the way we live, the way we talk, and the way we think. Unfortunately, some people who claim to follow Christ act like Harvey T. Hypocrite, so that the world sees little or no difference between him and them; sometimes the world even appears to conduct themselves in a much more civil way. However, as believers, this should never be the case! Through Scripture, God has given us the boundaries by which we ought to live, an example to follow in Christ, and the necessary knowledge of how to walk in love that produces righteousness and holiness which points the world to Him.

Key  
Question

In what ways should we as believers distinguish or differentiate ourselves from the world?

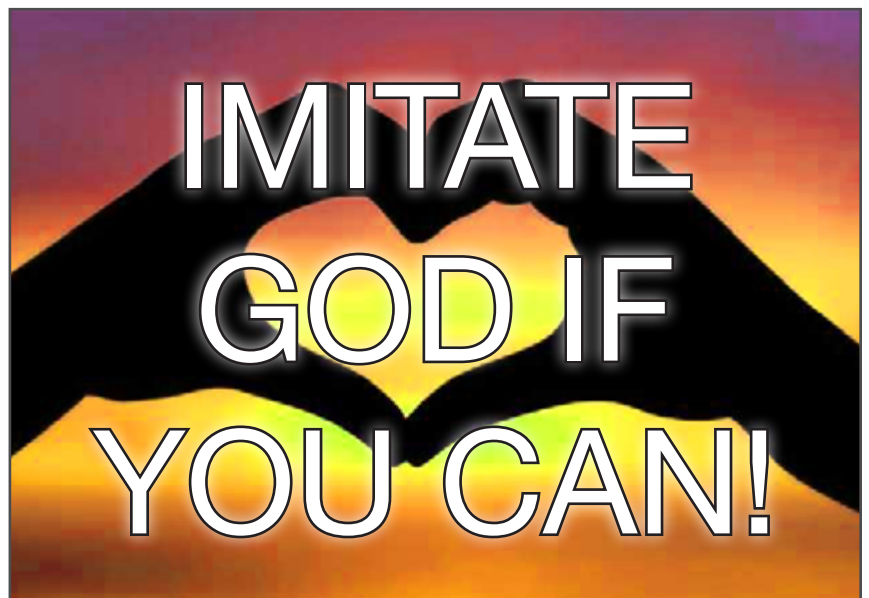


### Ephesians 5:1-2

#### ***BE IMITATORS OF CHRIST IN LOVE:***

In the previous chapter, Paul had instructed the Ephesians to “put off” their “former conduct” characterized by sin and disobedience and to “put on the new man” transformed by Christ to be righteous and holy ([Eph 4:17-32](#)). Now, as chapter 5 opens, he gives them the ideal standard to follow by way of a command to “**be imitators of God as dear children**” (v. 1). Paul doesn’t issue a new command here, but instead stresses God’s plan from the very beginning. God Himself created mankind in His image to function as His representative to the rest of creation ([Gen 1:27-31](#)). Even though man willfully chose to sin and sever his relationship with the Lord, God had a plan to redeem and restore a people through His grace and mercy and to call them to “be holy, for the Lord [their] God [is] holy” ([Lev 19:2](#)). For this reason, Jesus, who is the center of God’s redemptive plan, called those of us who follow Him to “be perfect, just as [our] Father in heaven is perfect” ([Matt 5:48](#)).

As believers, therefore, we must reflect the character of our heavenly Father by imitating Him. On our own, we could never reflect the righteousness and holiness of God because we can never achieve perfection; however, God doesn’t ask us to attempt this on our own, but He sent His Spirit to indwell us and guide us when we completely surrender to Him. Addressing the impossibility of people being saved by their own power, Jesus states, “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God” (Luke 18:27). The same principle applies in this case here in Ephesians; God can do the impossible through us by making us holy and conforming us to His image! God isn’t unfair in requiring us to imitate Him because He has given us everything we need to accomplish this task and He walks with us hand-in-hand through the daily struggles of life. Therefore, we have no excuse, except for our own sinfulness and stubbornness, for



## Instruct

not trusting God and allowing Him to work the impossible in our lives.

As His **dear children**, our actions and attitudes reflect upon the Lord, so we must make certain that we don't bring any shame or contempt upon His name. Paul has already warned the Ephesians not to walk any longer as the Gentiles, but in the Old Testament one could not tell difference between Israel and secular nations at points because they acted just like them—sometimes even worse! Not only did they bring shame upon the Lord, but they also caused the Gentiles to curse His name. Quoting [Isaiah 52:5](#) and [Ezekiel 36:22](#), Paul writes, "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you" ([Rom 2:24](#)). If we had witnessed the antics of Harvey T. Hypocrite in the introduction, we probably wouldn't assume that he had a relationship with Christ; because his car featured a church bumper sticker and he waved a bulletin wildly in the air, however, people unfairly associated his unbecoming actions on Christ even though he never mentioned Him by name. Consequently, we must be careful how we portray ourselves to others—not in a false, pretentious way—but in a way that positively reflects the values of our Savior.

How does the Spirit enable us to imitate God?  
How have you personally seen growth as an imitator of God?

Question  
# 1

For this reason, Paul gives us a specific characteristic to imitate in the life of **Christ**. In a supplement to the first command to **be imitators of God**, Paul also urges us to **walk in love as Christ has loved us and given Himself for us** (v. 2). In other words, we should exude sacrificial love to everyone: God ([Deut 6:5](#)), other believers ([John 13:35](#)), our neighbors ([Mark 12:31](#)), and even our enemies ([Matt 5:44](#)). Sacrificial **love** means that we invest wholly in a cause greater than ourselves by sharing the **love** of Christ with others unconditionally. In his first inaugural address, Ronald Reagan shares a story about a soldier named Martin Treptow who fought in France during World War 1 and died while trying to deliver correspondence between two Allied battalions. In his diary, they found the following pledge: "America must win this war. Therefore, I will work; I will save; I will sacrifice; I will endure; I will fight cheerfully and do my utmost, as if the issue of the whole struggle depended on me alone."

As believers, the "struggle" doesn't depend on us alone, but it depends solely on what Christ has already done on the cross. Yet, it still requires such devotion and sacrifice

that Martin Treptow showed. He understood the cause was greater than himself and he saw the need to give of himself selflessly. In the same way that Jesus understood the greatness of His cause to die for the sins of the world, we also ought to understand the greatness of our responsibility to **love as Christ**.



From time to time, we see greatly heroic and selfless acts like that of Martin Treptow, but in many ways our world has become selfish and self-centered—only extending **love** when they receive something in return. We, as believers, should stand in stark contrast to this type of attitude. As His **children**, God has simply called us to **love** others as He has loved us ([1 John 4:20-21](#)).

Before we leave this topic, we can briefly describe some of the characteristics of sacrificial **love**. This Christ-like type of **love** is unconditional and doesn't depend upon what others may do or say, but at the same time it doesn't overlook sin or enable sinfulness or abuse. As a result, it's unwavering, constant, and never-fading; as Paul says in [1 Corinthians 13:7-8](#), love "endures all things" and it "never fails." We **love** others not based on our own power, but because it's how God has conformed us to His image. Therefore, Christ-like sacrificial **love** elevates the needs of others above our own and points them to the restoration and life that Christ offers ([Phil 2:1-4](#)). When we exercise such **love** in the church, we will see a tremendous impact on the maturity of the body as well as on the secular world around us.

In what ways should we show sacrificial love to others?

Question # 2

Walking **in love**, therefore, is an act of worship and service unto the Lord. Paul describes Jesus' **love** as **an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma**. If God calls us to emulate this same type of **love** that Christ exhibits, we also ought to demonstrate our love for the Lord through our service to Him which also leads us to lovingly minister and serve others by representing Christ. In fact, Paul states, "Only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one

## Instruct

another” (Gal 5:13). As a conduit of God’s **love**, we must not be stingy or selective,



but authentically and generously extend **love** to others. We may tend to show **love** to those who **love** us in return or whom we may consider lovable, but, in reality, we should show **love** to all. Christ did! When we reflect Christ’s **love** in this manner, it pleases the Lord as a **sweet-smelling aroma**. As a community which should radiate

the **love** of His Son, let us please the Lord through the sincere imitation of His character by performing acts of worship and service **in love** in everything we do.

In what ways is love an act of worship and service?

Question  
# 3

## Ephesians 5:3-5

### **BE SEPARATED FROM LAWLESSNESS:**

In contrast, Paul tells the church in Ephesus to avoid activities which lead to lawlessness and unrestrained sin. When we **walk in love** then, we should not participate in sin of any kind. Although Paul doesn’t include a comprehensive list of sin here, he highlights some which are particularly dangerous in the church because they are the most prevalent in society and have the propensity to affect the church the most—especially if we don’t take care to guard against them. Out of the three sins listed in verse 3, Paul has already addressed two of them previously in Ephesians 4:19: **uncleanness** and **covetousness** (i.e. “greediness”). The third sin which he describes as **fornication** broadens the term “lewdness” (4:19) in order to emphasize that *any* form of sexual immorality is reprehensible to the Lord.

The term **fornication** comes from the word in which we get our modern term pornography. This depicts any activity outside of marriage between one man and one woman for life—including one’s thought-life (i.e. lust). Today, access to inappropriate material has become more readily available which has desensitized our culture to the



problems that sexual immorality produces. Culture tends to glorify and accept sexual activities that dishonor the Lord and devalue other humans. We have been bombarded so much by culture that sexual dysfunction seems normal and those who wait to have such a relationship exclusively within a biblically defined marriage are ridiculed and demeaned as abnormal. As God's community, we must take steps to prevent ourselves from engaging in these immoral thoughts, conversations, and actions. Therefore, we must know what God's Word says about the proper expression of love and not rely on how the culture defines or dictates its practice.



How has culture become desensitized by sexual immorality? How has this affected the church?

Question  
# 4

Next, Paul exhorts the church to refrain from participating in any form of **uncleanness** or moral impurity. We must avoid **all** impurity and seek to live with integrity above reproach. Since we have a higher standard to follow in Christ than the world, we must devote ourselves to applying God's Word and living by the principles that He identifies as pure and holy. When we abide by Scripture, we will live in purity just as our Savior does and we will bring honor and glory to Him in all we do. Not only should we refrain from **all** impurity as defined by God's Word, we should also avoid the appearance of evil altogether ([1 Thess 5:22](#)). If there is any ethical or moral question at all about an activity, we shouldn't participate. To live above reproach in purity means that we must be concerned about how our actions and attitudes reflect upon Christ as perceived by the world. Therefore, we shouldn't be engaged in anything that could remotely bring shame upon our Savior.

As believers, we should be unselfish in our perspective rather than self-centered and self-serving. Paul tells us that we shouldn't allow **covetousness** in our lives at all. Coveting, simply stated, is greediness - not being content with the blessings and possessions which God has graciously granted us - and always wanting more. Like the rampant sexual immorality so prominent in our society today, **covetousness** or

greediness has perhaps influenced the church the most. Many people seek not to serve



and give, but to take and receive! Some want to get their way in the church even at the expense of unity and to the detriment of the church's ministry. People have become more concerned about their preferences and opinions rather than the correct theological interpretation of God's Word. Yet, our life in Christ isn't about what we want, but about what He has done for us and how

He has called us as His ambassadors to reflect His character.

In what ways can we as a church combat covetousness in the body?

Question  
# 5

We should not only exercise integrity and purity in our actions, but also in the way that we speak. First, we shouldn't engage in **filthiness**—that is obscene speech characterized by indecency or shamefulness (v. 4). This can include cursing and vulgarity, slander, gossip, explicit threats or violence, morbid jokes, or any malicious attacks that demean other people. Second, Paul warns against **foolish talking**. The Bible says that the fool says in his heart there is no God ([Psalm 14:1](#)). **Foolish talking** includes more than blasphemy, however. We must think before we speak and assess the affect that our words have on others. **Foolish talking**, therefore, includes careless speech where we talk unfiltered about personal details, air dirty laundry, or make casual statements that lead to anger and resentment. Finally, we shouldn't engage in **coarse jesting**. This includes sexual innuendo, dirty jokes, and salacious boasting about sexual impropriety—taking it lightly rather than the sinful. Instead, we should honor the Lord by the **giving of thanks** and the directing of our praise toward Him. Let us speak praises rather than sinful speech of society. Let us honor our Lord with our lips as we guard our hearts against any and all impurity so that we may bring glory to Him.

In what ways has careless and foolish talk entered the church? How should we combat it?

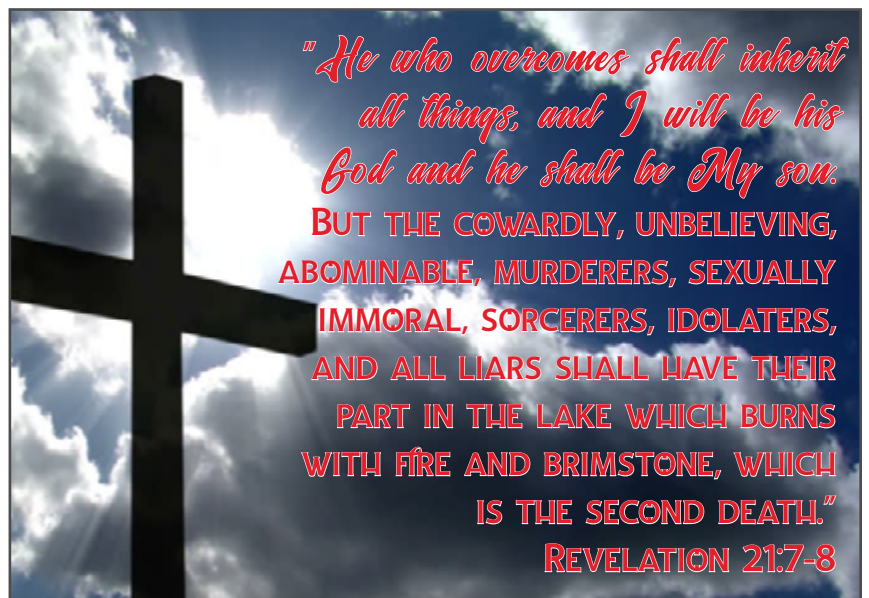
Question  
# 6

Paul captures the gravity of his command to avoid these sins by saying they should **not even be named among us as is fitting for the saints** (v. 3). Paul isn't saying that we can't preach against them or warn about the consequences and pitfalls of these sins. On the contrary, this phrase means that we should not practice them at all. No one in the church should be involved in such activities. In [Ephesians 4:17](#), Paul has already warned against following the practices of the world and reverting to our old, sinful lifestyles, but now in the strongest of terms he argues that we must avoid making these same sinful mistakes at all cost. We must live with integrity and holiness **as is fitting for the saints**. We often think of a saint as a person who embodies love, compassion, good character, and righteousness—something which few people can attain. However, a saint is anyone who has a relationship with the Lord! Therefore, we are all called to exhibit love, compassion, good character, and righteousness. As a believer, we must live up to the standards to which God has called us in Jesus Christ and allow His light to shine through us so that others may see Him in our lives.

How does the world define a saint? What characteristics are we to have as saints in the Lord?

Question  
# 7

Paul explains that we ought not participate in these evil deeds because those who do will face judgment and they will not have **any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God** (v. 5). This doesn't mean that we can lose our salvation, but it means that we shouldn't act like the unregenerate, unrepentant world. Indeed, God will still convict us of living in sin and He will judge us according to our behavior as His followers ([Heb 12:5-7](#); [1 Peter 4:17-19](#)). Furthermore, Paul emphasizes that we **know this** based on Scripture that **no fornicator** (i.e. sexually immoral), **unclean**, or **covetous** person will



inherit eternal life unless they confess their sins and repent in Christ (see [1 John 1:5-10](#); [Rev 21:8](#)). In [1 Corinthians 6:9-11](#), Paul deals with a similar situation where some in the church participated in various types of sexual immorality and even celebrated it! Even

## *Instruct*

though the Corinthians and every one of us for that matter have practiced such sin at one point in our lives this should no longer be the case, Paul reminds us that because we had sought repentance and been saved by Christ, we should act like it now! For this reason, Paul exclaims, “And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:11). Let us, therefore, live righteously in Christ, bringing honor and glory to His name in all that we do.

## *Ephesians 5:6*

### ***BE NOT DECEIVED BY LIES:***

Finally, Paul warns the Ephesians not to be deceived by the lies of **empty words** that promise happiness and satisfaction in a life of sin apart from Christ. Participation in sin only incurs **the wrath of God** which leads to destruction for **the sons of disobedience** (v. 6). The enemy has attempted to **deceive** us in two primary ways. First, the empty promise of sin is that it can satisfy our deepest longings and can provide everlasting joy. Second, the enemy has tried to fool society into thinking that sin has no consequences either because people deny the existence of God altogether or wrongly believe that a loving God will not punish sin and allow everyone to enter heaven regardless of what they have done.

Yet, sin never satisfies; it always produces an unquenchable desire for more! Sin enslaves us to our habits and addictions. The great lie perpetrated by the enemy is that Christ wants to remove all the fun and joy from life; the evil one seeks to make sin look much more attractive than it really is and to downplay the cost of participating in it. Christ, however, has come not to rob us of joy, but so that we might live life to the fullest and enjoy every minute of it! Because God is loving, He has provided a way through the sacrifice of His Son that we can have eternal life through grace—free of charge! All we must do is accept that gracious gift. Because God is also just, however, He will punish sin and those who refuse to repent. Therefore, those who reject His gift in Christ will endure His wrath upon their sin and will be eternally separated from Him.



We must not let the lies of the enemy **deceive** us into thinking we can do it “if it feels good” without consequence. Let us instead live in truth and walk in the sacrificial love of our Savior so that others may see the transformation in us.

In what ways does the enemy deceive the world about sin? How can we protect ourselves from falling into this deception?

Question  
# 7

In the introduction, we met Harvey T. Hypocrite. Hopefully, none of us acts like Harvey, but chances are that we have at some point in our lives or at least know someone who has. Because we reflect upon the character of Christ, we must be careful how we walk as His dear children. Our actions, speech, and thoughts should distinguish us from the world and identify us as followers of Christ. Unfortunately, some have let the “empty words” of the enemy influence their thinking and have lost their focus on Christ. Instead of imitating the love of Christ, some imitate the world and have returned to their former lifestyle. This should never be the case for a Christian though!

On the contrary, we have a higher calling to imitate God and live according to the righteous principles of His Word. God has not asked us to do this on our own and according to our own power. He has sent the Holy Spirit to guide us and empower us. Through prayer, by reading Scripture, and by submitting to the leadership of the Spirit, we have all that we need to walk successfully in the Lord and represent Him well. Therefore, let us be careful how we walk as a community, so that we radiate the love of Christ to the secular world around us. Let us no longer succumb to temptation and sin, but let us daily seek to allow the Lord to conform us to His image.

## ***Incorporate***

In what ways can we as a church imitate the love of Christ? How can we extend His love to the secular community?

In what ways do we need to separate ourselves from the world? What are the consequences if we don't?

How can being accountable to one another in the church help prevent us from being deceived? What else must we do as a church to help from being deceived by the enemy about the effects of sin?

*April 14, 2019*



# *The Witness of the Community*

## *Ephesians 5:7-16*

Focal Verse:

“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.”

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Ephesians 5:11



## Introduce

As Rhonda laid in bed, the lightning flashed in the window as the thunder crashed and shook the foundations of the building. The wind began to howl, blowing the rain and pea-sized hail against the side of the house. It's definitely springtime in Texas she thought! With the storm still raging, she eventually fell asleep and slept soundly. Waking the next morning before her alarm sounded—or so she thought—she flipped on the light switch only to have nothing happen. At some point during the storm, the power had gone out! Looking at her phone, she realized that she had actually overslept and would be late for work if she didn't hurry. She didn't have time to light candles or find other sources of light, so she would just have to deal with a dark bathroom and closet.

Although it usually took Rhonda a while to awake fully in the mornings, she had the path to the shower memorized. She could find her way there with her eyes closed—and they usually were in the mornings! So, she thought that getting ready in the dark wouldn't be *that* bad after all. Yet, the stark reality hit her when she began to fumble through her closet to



select her outfit and then as she stood in front of the mirror to do her make-up and hair. Because she was in such a hurry, she didn't even think about using the light on her phone so she could see the style and color of the outfit that she selected. Everything in her closet was organized, so she thought she had picked out a color-coordinated outfit and shoes. After getting dressed, she searched through the drawer in her vanity until she found her brush and make-up, which she hurriedly applied.

She confidently thought that she had overcome the darkness and did a good job in getting ready quickly to be able to leave on time. Hopping into her car, she manually opened the garage door to reveal the beautiful sunshine in the cloudless sky. When she got to work, Rhonda looked at her outfit fully illuminated by the sun only to realize that none of it matched! The red shoes clashed with her purple skirt and green top.

## Introduce

Horrified, she didn't even want to know what her make-up even looked like, so she tried to avoid seeing herself in a mirror all day. Dressing in the dark didn't turn out as well as she had initially thought!

Light shows the truth and exposes things that are obscured in the darkness. Just as Rhonda found out the truth about her outfit, the light of Christ exposes "unfruitful" and sinful deeds and shows us the truth about how we conduct our lives. As followers of Christ, we should walk in the light as witnesses of the change which He has produced within us. We should allow the Spirit to guide us to live in "goodness, righteousness, and truth" in a way that pleases the Lord. As we learned last week, we ought to differentiate ourselves from the secular world around us. People should see a clear difference in the way we walk! Therefore, let us commit ourselves as a community of believers to walk in the light, so that we represent our Savior well and bring honor and glory to Him.

Key  
Question

In what ways does light expose sin or show us truth?

### Ephesians 5:7-10

#### **WALK IN THE LORD'S WAY:**

Paul opens this section where he concluded the previous one by urging the Ephesians to distinguish themselves from the world and **not to be partakers** in sin **with them** (v. 7). **Partakers** more aptly means “partners” and pictures the uniting of one’s self with the practices and mindset of the secular world. Instead of linking ourselves with the world, we should join with Christ and align ourselves with His character. In [2 Corinthians 6:14](#), Paul instructs us, “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?” We often rightly use this verse to speak about the danger of a Christian marrying a non-Christian, but it actually speaks to all types of relationships. For example, we shouldn’t partner with non-believers in marriage, close friendships, and business matters. When we have a close, intimate relationship with non-believers, it tends to cause discord and strife by diverting our focus from Christ and turning our hearts away from Him—just look at Solomon whose many wives turned his heart from the Lord and drove him to worship false gods ([1 Kings 11:4](#)).

In what ways have some believers become “partnered” with the world? How can we battle this temptation to partner with the world?

Question  
#1

This doesn’t mean that we can’t have acquaintances and friendly relationships with non-believers. How else will they hear the gospel and see the transformation modeled in our lives unless we tell them and show them? What it does mean, however, is that we must exercise great caution in developing close relationships with people who will ultimately influence us the most. No matter how intelligent, wise, independent, or strong-willed we



***Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.***

1 Cor. 15:33

## Instruct

may see ourselves—when we constantly surround ourselves with ungodly influences, it will eventually rub off on us at some point. When we spend enough time with a group, for instance, we will usually begin to talk like they do, act like they do, dress like they do, and think like they do. Even if we don't, oftentimes we become guilty by association! Regardless, Christ has called us to be distinct from the world. Instead of partnering with the world, we should show them **the light** of Christ in our daily **walk**!

Why should our closest relationships all have a relationship with Christ?

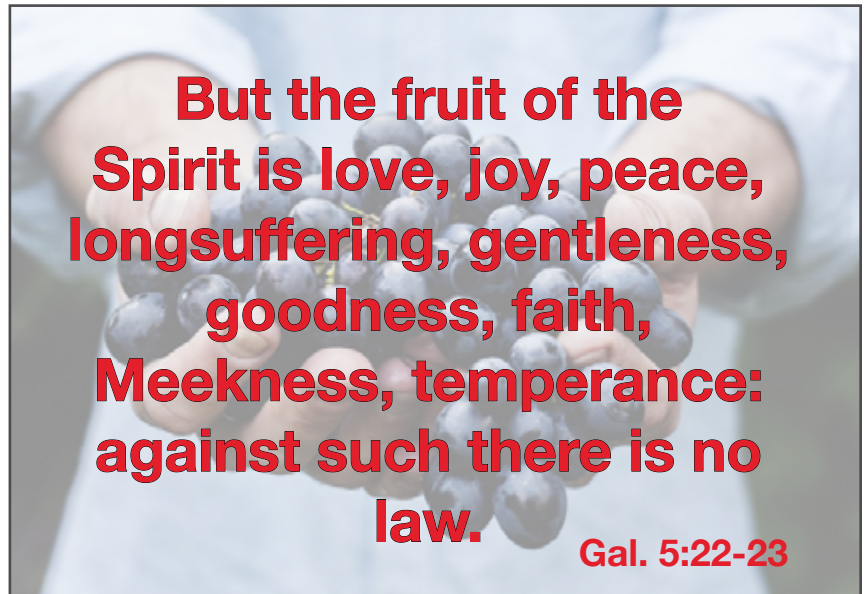
Question  
# 1

Paul explains that we shouldn't partner with the world because we no longer live in darkness as we **once** did, **but now** we **are light in the Lord** (v. 8). Thus, he commands us to **walk as children of the light**. In this context, **darkness** refers to willful acts of disobedience and sin that go contrary to the will of God and His holy character. Before we had a relationship with Christ, we all lived in **darkness** because we freely participated in the evil deeds of the flesh. However, Christ has rescued us from this **darkness** and saved us from eternal destruction; therefore, we should now bear the **fruit of the Spirit** and participate in activities which are **acceptable to the Lord** (vv. 9-10). When we look at our lives before and after we began our relationship with Christ, we ought to see a stark contrast! Although we will still have imperfections appear in our lives from time to time, we should see a distinct change in our attitudes, our desires, our perspectives, our thoughts, and our actions. In Christ, everything should have changed!

To walk in the way of the Lord, therefore, means that we will seek to discern (i.e. **find out**) **what is acceptable to Him**. We no longer allow the desires of the flesh to dictate our choices and consume our attention, but we will evaluate **what** pleases **the Lord** by surrendering to the **Spirit** and allowing Him to control our desires. When we **walk as children of light**, the **Spirit** will produce **fruit** in our lives that is consistent with God's will and character. Here, Paul lists three specific traits which the **Spirit** will **produce** within us: **all goodness, righteousness, and truth**. By no means is this a comprehensive list of the ways in which the **Spirit** will work through our lives, but it gives us a basic picture of the type of change He will produce when we submit to Him.



Rather than discussing **all** the ways these three types of **fruit** should become visible in our lives, we should learn to ask three questions to ascertain if it is an activity in which we should engage or an attitude we should have. First, **goodness** refers to something that is morally right—not according to human perspective or culture, but in the eyes of the Lord. Therefore, we should ask ourselves when making a decision: Is it morally right? Second, **righteousness** means to be in right standing with the Lord; hence, we should ask: Does it reflect God’s character? Finally, God embodies **truth** ([Psalm 86:11](#)) and has revealed that **truth** plainly to us through Scripture. To understand the first two questions about **goodness and righteousness** correctly, we must have a standard by which we can judge morality and right from wrong. Because Scripture is **truth**, we have an inerrant and infallible source to judge things properly; therefore, we should ask: Does our decision align with Scripture? By asking these three questions before engaging in an activity and by submitting to the Spirit, we will always make decisions that please the Lord and bear good **fruit**.



What other fruit does the Spirit produce in our lives? How does the Spirit help us know God’s will and evaluate choices in life?

Question  
# 2

### ***Ephesians 5:11-14***

**WALK AS WITNESSES:** In order to **walk** as witnesses of Christ, we should **have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness** (v. 11a). Just as **darkness** obscures dangers that lie ahead, sin conceals the mortal danger that awaits those who don’t repent and it makes “empty” promises of fun and happiness on which it can never deliver (Eph 5:6). As a result, sin eventually desensitizes our minds by making our “understanding darkened” in which we no longer have a working moral compass to

## Instruct

help differentiate right from wrong ([Eph 4:18](#)). As a result, those who live in **darkness** will experience destruction at their own peril which will eternally separate them from Christ. Because the rest of the world lives in this same **darkness** by willfully participating in evil deeds, it can cause others to remain unaware of the consequences of their sin. To the world, these sinful actions simply seem normal; it's business as usual! However, the world needs to have a source of **light** to point them to the **truth**.

In what ways does the darkness of sin hide danger to the world? How should we help the world to see this danger?

Question  
# 3

While thinking about the effect that **light** has on the world, I fondly began to recall the opportunity that I had to visit Arches National Park in Utah last May. During that trip, Bob Oatman and I decided to tempt our fates at hiking the challenging three-mile trail to see Delicate Arch—one of the most beautiful sandstone formations in the park. Setting out at mid-morning, we peered into the distance, looking at the daunting task before us. Although the trail began relatively flat and unassuming, it quickly turned into



an arduous trek up a steep incline on the face of the mountain with nothing but slick sandstone for footing. At the top of the first incline, the land leveled off, giving the false impression that the worst was behind us. Before reaching the arch, however, we faced an even more perilous climb on a narrow, winding path abutted next to the mountain on one side

and a sheer, vertical cliff dropping hundreds of feet to the canyon below on the other side. Yet, when we came around the corner to see Delicate Arch in the foreground with the La Salle Mountains in the background, it was worth the climb!

Knowing this spot was highly favored for night photography, I began to imagine how it would have been to try to climb this mountain in the dark without any **light** at all—whether natural **light** from the moon or artificial **light** from a flashlight. One word would summarize that attempt: foolish! First, I would not have seen the right path to take that would have gotten me safely to the top. I wouldn't have seen the danger of the trail either where one mis-step could have sent me plummeting to my death at the bottom of the canyon. I needed the **light** to illuminate the way for me and to **expose** any of the dangers that laid in my way. Second, without **light**, I wouldn't have seen the beauty of the world around me. I would have only existed in hopelessness, wondering if there were something better out there—never knowing the true beauty of what I was missing! I wouldn't even have seen the arch or the beautiful snow-covered mountains in the distance. All would have been cloaked in **darkness**.

Those who live in **darkness** can't see the true beauty of God's plan for life; they only exist in hopelessness, wondering if what they have experienced is all there is to life. Those of us in Christ, however, have hope and we know that greater things await us in Him! Therefore, those of us who have hope should **expose the unfruitful works of**



**darkness**. Paul qualifies these **unfruitful works** as **shameful** deeds **done by them in secret**, borrowing directly from Jesus' teaching in John chapter 3 (v. 12). In answering Nicodemus' question about eternal life, Jesus explains that "men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" ([John 3:19](#)). Through this, we can see how they try to use **darkness** to conceal their true motives and cover their tracks; they do these things in **secret**, so that others won't find out. A thief, for example, typically breaks in during the night under cover of darkness in the best-hidden area of the home, so that no one will see. In contrast, we want to talk about good things like the beauty of Delicate Arch. The deeds **done** by those in **darkness** are so **shameful** to even mention or speak; they want to keep them hidden rather than announce them to the rest of the world!

As **children of the light**, our main function is to show the nature and motivation for



## Instruct

actions or attitudes which enables us to judge whether they are good or bad. For this reason, Paul further states that **all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light** (v. 13). In other words, light shows things for what they truly are: evil and selfish or good and holy. Jesus also says, “For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God” (John 3:20-21). Specifically, in this context Paul calls us to be an example to those who live in **darkness** by pointing them to the **truth**; thus, we will explicitly **expose** evil deeds by living exemplary lives that reflect God’s character.

In what way does the light help us to test one’s deeds and character?

Question  
# 4

Although God has called us as believers to **expose** the **unfruitful works of darkness**, we shouldn’t condemn others or point out their deeds maliciously in a way that drives them further from restoration in Christ. At the same time, however, we shouldn’t remain silent or hidden from view, so that the world has no reference to the **truth** of the gospel as depicted through our lives. Therefore, we must ask ourselves: How can we become effective as the **light** to help others see their errant ways and turn to Christ? When seeking to live as **light** and **expose** evil deeds, we should remember three principles to practice. First, we must demonstrate the gospel in the way that we live; thus, we must be consistent to live in holiness and righteousness just as Christ did. Although many times people will see the difference in our lives without us needing to say anything, we still need to explain how Christ saved us and transformed us. Consequently, our walk must match our talk!

Second, we should show them the principles and boundaries in Scripture, so they can hear God speak and we can allow the Holy Spirit to do the work of conviction. When they physically read from God’s Word, they can know that He has communicated directly with them rather than taking it as our mere human opinion. Of course, some will reject God’s divinely inspired Word and refuse to listen to His advice for life; men rejected Jesus, who is **truth**, when He spoke to them face to face! However, at least we can say that they have heard the **truth**. Our job is to present it—not to respond for

them in one way or another. Let God speak through His Word; we must simply be the source of **light** that points others to the truth!

Third, we must speak the **truth** when necessary rather than remaining silent against immorality in any form! People need to hear the **truth** and if we as Christians don't tell them, they won't hear it from any other source in society. Today, many people subscribe

to the idea that it doesn't matter what others believe or practice as long as their actions don't directly affect them. They take a hands-off approach and believe the motto "no harm, no foul." So, many believers remain silent about the rampant immorality that exists in society. If we have a relationship with Christ and know the **truth**, we have a responsibility



to proclaim it—not in an arrogant, condescending way, but in a loving way that directs them to Christ. We must take a stand and proclaim the **truth** as described in Scripture. If we knew something to be true and it would definitely prevent a tragedy or save a life physically, wouldn't we share it with urgency? As believers, we have that life-altering **truth** which saves and it's free to all who will believe and accept it! Let us proclaim it with urgency and no longer remain silent.

In what ways can we be a positive light in the world as believers?

Question  
# 5

To end this section, Paul combines both [Isaiah 26:19 and 60:1](#) to emphasize how we ought to reflect the **light** of Christ in our lives (v. 14). Although those in Christ who have already died await their physical, bodily resurrection, those of us who are alive in Christ already participate in His resurrection by dying to our old way of life and walking in newness of life conformed to His image ([Rom 6:4; Gal 2:20](#)). If we have a relationship with Christ, we have been transformed; if we haven't seen any change in our lives, we better ask if we have a genuine relationship with Him. In Christ, we've been changed from the inside out and our outward actions manifest or reveal that inner change.



## Instruct

Consequently, we reflect the **light** of His righteousness and holiness which He Himself has given us. Just as the moon reflects the **light** of the more powerful sun, we reflect the **light** of Christ to the world around us. Although we are not the source of that **light**, we point others to the One who is and allow Him to shine through us brightly!

In what ways do we reflect the light of Christ to the world?

Question  
# 5

## Ephesians 5:15-16

**WALK WISELY:** Finally, Paul encourages the Ephesians to **walk** wisely (v. 15). He implores them to pay particular attention (i.e. **see then**) to make sure that they **walk** carefully (i.e. **circumspectly**) **not as fools, but as wise**. Based on Scripture, a **fool** is one who says in his heart there is no God and participates in corrupt and abominable works (Psalm 14:1). In this context, it represents someone who professes to have a relationship with Christ, but lives in **darkness** as the world. For this reason, we must pay close attention to how we live! We must think about how our actions reflect upon the Lord and how others around us may perceive them. Therefore, we must think before we speak and evaluate what effect our words will have on others. We need to think before we act; rather than reacting to a situation, we need to act proactively by always living with integrity. We should never allow ourselves to be caught off guard when a situation arises, but we must be grounded in Scripture and led by the Spirit! In everything, we need to seek God's wisdom and abide by the principles He has given us, so that we will always do what is right and honorable.

We can't afford to waste any opportunity to point others to Christ **because the days are evil** (v. 16). Instead, we need to make



the most of (i.e. **redeeming**) our **time** by investing in things which serve an eternal purpose! We must act with a sense of urgency to reveal the **truth** because the world is separated from Christ and headed to Hell; none of us is guaranteed tomorrow, so we need to make the most of today to proclaim the gospel! We live in a self-proclaimed “busy” world, but we tend to fill our lives with activities and things that have little eternal significance. Think about how much time the typical believer spends watching television or surfing the Internet as compared to reading Scripture and praying. Think about how many extracurricular activities or hobbies we and our families have and how little time we spend serving each week through the church. Think about how much time we spend talking about current issues and how little we spend sharing the gospel! What has the most significance and value to us: the eternal things of Christ or the things with which we typically fill our days? If you’re like me, this challenge by Paul should really cause us to stop and think about how we invest our time and it should cause us to be more careful about how we **walk**, so we don’t miss any opportunity to share the gospel.

In what ways can we effectively redeem our time in order to battle evil in this world?

Question  
# 6

Probably, most of us remember the children's song "This Little Light of Mine" based on [Matthew 5:14-16](#). One of the stanzas poses the question and then answers it: "Hide it under a bushel? No! I'm gonna let it shine?" We shouldn't hide our light in Christ, we should let the whole world see the change He has made in us. Yet, many Christians don't let their light shine. Some may still obscure it by participating in sin or thinking like the world rather than maturing daily in Christ and becoming more like Him. Others may fear the consequences of being light in a dark and depraved generation. They may fear speaking out and living boldly in Christ because of mockery, exclusion, and persecution. Regardless of the reason, we must allow our light to shine and reveal the truth of our Savior!

We don't have to be "in your face" about allowing our light to shine, but neither should we shrink in fear. We can allow our light to shine meekly and humbly because light is *always* greater than darkness and it will *always* reveal the truth. At the same time, we need to speak against sin and warn of the consequences of failing to repent. We need to make the most of our time as a community to point others to Christ in this lost and dying world. Therefore, we must be a strong witness in the way that we imitate Christ, so that others may see the truth in our lives and understand how Christ has changed us. As His community, let live as the children's song says: "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine. This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine. Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine." Let us be a strong witness as His people!

## ***Incorporate***

How can we as a community encourage each other to walk in the way of the Lord?

Why should we be active and visible in the secular community as believers? What happens when the church isn't? In what ways can we be light right here in Fort Worth?

In what ways can we as FBCFW make the most-effective use of our time in sharing the gospel to the world?

*April 21, 2019*



# *The Will of the Lord for the Community*

## *Ephesians 5:17-21*

Focal Verse:

"Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is."

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Ephesians 5:17



## Introduce

The big day had finally arrived which the Clueless family had anticipated for months when they would hop in their car and travel to Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado for their vacation. Like many events in their life, they knew their final destination, but that was it! How they got from point A to point B always remained a mystery to them and it usually created quite a memorable adventure. Before leaving on a trip, Ralph Clueless never really made any definitive plans about the route which he would go. He never used any of the online mapping programs because he figured that he had a great sense of direction on his own; after all, he did have GPS and numerous road signs to guide him if he needed them.

After hurriedly packing that morning, the entire family loaded into the car and headed out of town. Ralph had already entered the destination into the GPS, so the computer informed them to travel northwest on US 287 toward Amarillo, Texas. Ralph complied explicitly with the first few turns, but then his mind began to wander. As he stared out the window at the endless plains dotted only with gigantic wind turbines and occasional farm



The picture that I sent you of the Arizona state sign.

houses, he listened to his children incessantly fighting in the back seat. To drown out the noise and hopefully have some peace and quite on *his* vacation, he turned up the radio while his wife slept with her head pressed against the passenger window. As he mindlessly drove down the interstate, the open prairie turned into a barren land with few hills and the beginning of some desert-like canyons. The hills gave way to larger mountains—not like those in Colorado, but brown mountains with large boulders and little vegetation. Still, Ralph pressed forward, driving through towns and changing landscapes, paying no attention to the road signs or the GPS as it barked instructions. Later that day, the landscape changed once again as they began ascending a gentle slope up in elevation and the desert once again changed into a forest thick with conifer trees. Ralph began thinking he had finally arrived in Colorado, until he saw a sign which said “Flagstaff” fifteen miles. “Flagstaff,” he thought, “Isn’t

## Introduce

that in Arizona?!” Despite all the road signs along the way, all the clues in the different landscapes and topography, and the correct data streaming from the GPS, the Clueless family had somehow gotten way off course.

The Clueless family unfortunately operates like many Christians who set out in life without a plan. Yet, Paul clearly instructs us to “understand what the will of the Lord is” ([Eph 5:17](#)). We have a biblical mandate to know and abide by the will of the Lord! Some, however, throw up their hands, decrying that they can’t discern God’s will. God’s will isn’t a mystery or impossible to know; He has clearly outlined it in His Word and has sent His Spirit to guide us. We have no excuse not to abide by His will. The reason that many people find His will difficult to discern is that they don’t spend the necessary time to plan in prayer and Bible study—just like Ralph didn’t map out his trip. In addition, they also face many distractions in life, just like Ralph as he drove mindlessly down the highway; we tend to drown out the Spirit’s voice, coasting through life obliviously. Here, in [Ephesians 5:17-21](#), Paul describes the will of the Lord in terms of His plan to unite His people into one body under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, let us seek to know God’s will as a community, so that we may act in unison!

Key  
Question

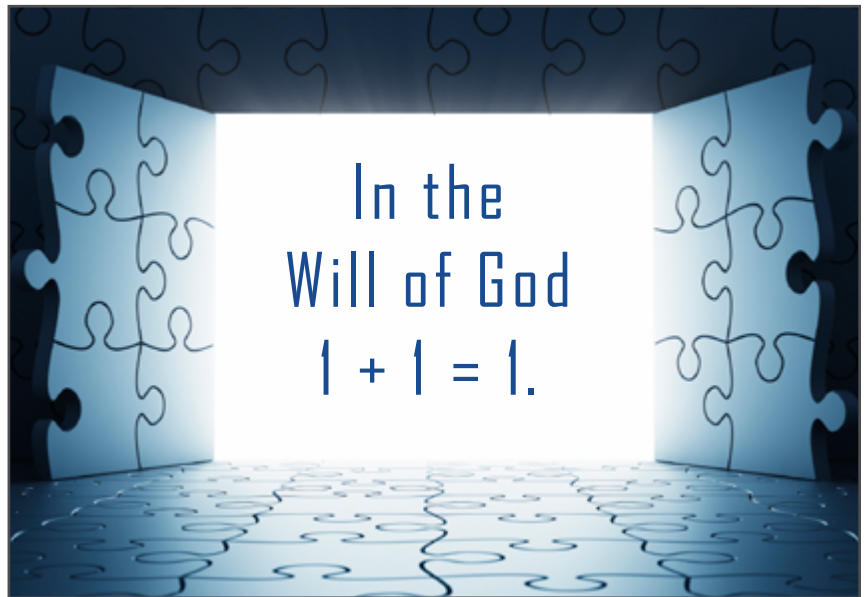
According to Ephesians, what is God’s will for the community?

### Ephesians 5:17

#### **UNDERSTAND THE LORD'S WILL:**

In last week's lesson, we learned that we ought to walk wisely according to the wisdom and principles given by Christ rather than walking foolishly on our own power as if God didn't exist. Paul picks up this same theme in verse 17 where he reminds us **not to be unwise**. Instead, he commands us to discern or **understand the will of the Lord**. To the world, God's wisdom may look like foolishness, but in the end it is the only path that leads to life (see [1 Cor 1:18](#)). God's wisdom not only provides eternal life through the sacrificial death of Christ, but it also provides the keys to living life to the fullest by following the boundaries He has set and transcribed in His Word.

Most often people focus on God's **will** for their lives individually—and God does have a specific plan for each of us that corresponds to His cosmic plan for the entire world. In this context, however,



Paul is talking about knowing **the will of the Lord** collectively for us as a community of believers. Too often in Western society, we lose focus on the community by overemphasizing individuality. Truly, the entire book of Ephesians demonstrates how God desires us to function in unity as one body to accomplish the purpose for which He has called us. Specifically, in [Ephesians 5:16-6:9](#), God outlines His **will** for how we are to function corporately as His people in the church controlled by His Spirit ([5:17-21](#)), as a Spirit-filled family ([5:22-6:4](#)), and as a Spirit-filled believer in the secular workplace ([6:5-9](#)).

Although we can't overlook the community with respect to the individual, we also can't overlook the responsibility of the individual for the community! What God has outlined in Scripture as His **will** for us collectively as a church also applies to us individually. To be united and strengthened together as one body requires us individually to do our part by abiding by His **will**. As we learned in the introduction, we sometimes fail to

## Instruct

**understand the will of the Lord** because we become distracted by events in life or become so rushed that we don't take time to listen and plan according to His Word. Throughout Scripture, God has clearly revealed His **will** to us both collectively and individually; while we may wait to receive specific instruction from Him regarding specific choices, paths, or ministry opportunities, we can still be engaged in actively participating in His **will**!

Why must we rely on Scripture to discern or understand God's will?

Question  
# 1

Based upon our study of Ephesians and our general knowledge of Scripture, we can discern **the will of the Lord** with respect to four general areas. God wants us to have a relationship with Him through Jesus Christ and to mature in the knowledge of the truth. In 1 Timothy 2:4, Paul declares that God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth." The word translated "desires" is a verb based on the noun normally translated "**will**"; thus, it is God's **will** for "all men to be saved." As humans, God has given us a choice whether to follow His **will** or not. If some reject Him, it doesn't negate His **will** for mankind, but it does mean that His full wrath will visit them in their sin. Nonetheless, God wants us to repent and have a relationship with Him, but even in His sovereignty He doesn't force it upon us.

How would you describe God's plan (i.e. will) for salvation based upon Scripture?

Question  
# 2

Second, God desires us to live holy and righteous lives because He has transformed us from death to life to be conformed to His image ([Eph 5:1](#)). Because we often read Scripture in short, fragmented sections or sometimes very quickly as an overview, we miss some of these important connections woven into a single book like Ephesians. Over the last month, we have seen the theme of holiness recur time and again—and really since the very beginning of the book! In [Ephesians 1:4](#), God announces His will in that He has "chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame." As we arrive in [4:1](#), we see this same theme described in detail where we are encouraged "to walk worthy of the calling." As a result, we should

no longer walk in sin and disobedience as we once did, but we should put on the characteristics of Christ and follow His example ([4:17-5:2](#)). Consequently, we must guard our thoughts, exercise caution in how and what we say, and live with integrity, even avoiding the appearance of any kind of evil ([5:3-16](#)).

Third, God's **will** is that we be united in one body, engaged in worship and service. Paul weaves this theme throughout the book of Ephesians as well. Regardless of our background, we should function

as one people, working together and using our many and varied gifts to glorify the Lord through service ([Eph 4:11-12](#)). Moreover, God desires that we mature together as His body in a way that we remain faithful to His Word and keep from succumbing to the false doctrine and lies of this world ([Eph 4:14-16](#)). Finally, God wants us to share the gospel with all nations and all people; in fact, He has commanded us to do so ([Matt 28:19-20](#)). If God has specifically commanded us to do something (or not do something), then we can certainly know it's His **will!** We should pray that God would grant us opportunities to share the gospel, but we should never debate whether we *ought* to share or not; that's already a settled matter! We should share the gospel with everyone we meet.



How does Ephesians describe God's will for us as a community of believers?

Question  
# 3

## **Ephesians 5:18-21**

### ***UNITE UNDER THE SPIRIT'S LEADERSHIP:***

After instructing us to **understand the will of the Lord**, Paul describes how we can unite under the Spirit's leadership as a community. In the form of a negative command, he prohibits us from being **drunk with wine** because that only leads to debauchery (i.e. **dissipation**), but he follows it with a positive command to be **filled with the Spirit** (v. 18). We can't lose sight of the focus in this passage by concentrating on the phrase



## Instruct

prohibiting intoxication. Drunkenness is wrong and unacceptable period ([Prov 23:30-35](#)). Paul uses this comparison between drunkenness and being **filled with the Spirit** to highlight the difference in the paths of the believer and the world. The drunkard (i.e. the world) walks down a path of destruction because they have no inhibition and lack self-control. Without self-control, drunkards don't watch what they say, have little control over what they do, often engage in the lusts of the flesh including sexual immorality, frequently experience fits of rage and anger, and participate in shameful activities often in a public setting.



*Intoxication has often been lightly treated on television, such as the lovable drunk Otis Campbell from The Andy Griffith Show, but in reality it's no laughing matter!*

Nothing good ever comes from being **drunk!**

Whereas the drunkard loses control, we should voluntarily surrender control to the **Holy Spirit** and allow Him to guide our lives; He will lead us down a path to abundant life in Christ rather than destruction! In contrast to those who are intoxicated, the **Spirit** enables us to exercise self-control ([Gal 5:23](#)) and helps us to weigh moral choices so we can make the right decision ([Eph 4:17-22](#)). In the Spirit, therefore, we can live a righteous life as Paul has outlined in [Ephesians 4:17-5:16](#) which we have studied over the last few weeks. When we surrender to the **Spirit**, we will watch what we say ([Eph 5:4](#)), we will watch what we do ([Eph 5:3](#)), we will engage in righteous and holy activities ([Eph 4:23-24](#)), we will deal appropriately with anger and rage ([Eph 4:26-27](#)), and we will not practice those things which are indeed shameful ([Eph 5:7-12](#)). Consequently, Paul uses drunkenness to highlight these clear differences in the way that we should live in Christ.

The way in which Paul writes the phrase **be filled with the Spirit** in the Greek depicts an on-going process in which we intentionally submit to His full control in every area of our lives. He isn't referring to a so-called "second blessing" where we receive more of the **Spirit** at points in our walk with Christ—Scripture does not teach this idea. At the

time we repent and accept Christ as our Savior, we receive the Holy **Spirit** in full. We don't get any more or any less of the **Spirit** as we walk through life. However, what does happen and what Paul is describing is the human tendency to wrestle control away from the **Spirit** and to attempt to do things on our own. Unfortunately, we often think we know best how to manage our lives, so we trust in our own ability and wisdom—pushing the **Spirit** aside and calling upon Him only when we “need” Him. **To be filled with the Spirit**, conversely, means that we fully submit ourselves to His leadership and grant Him full authority to guide our actions and decisions all the time! Thus, being filled with the **Spirit** requires us to focus continually on Him and to give Him unhindered access to our thoughts and actions.

What does a Spirit-filled life look like?

Question  
# 4

In verses 19-21, Paul clarifies what it means to be filled with the Spirit by identifying four particular areas. First, the **Spirit** will lead us to **speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.**

*Neither give heed to fables  
and endless genealogies,  
which minister questions,  
rather than godly edifying  
which is in faith: so do*

1 Timothy 1:4

In other words, we should speak words that encourage and edify the body by reminding others about who Christ is and what He has done for us. Too often, the church mimics the world by complaining, criticizing, gossiping, and tearing down others when we disagree. Rather than seeing the positive that God is doing in

and through the church, some continually dwell on the negative. Certainly, we must identify areas for improvement and offer constructive solutions which help us mature as a body, but we must do so in a positive and uplifting way that points to Christ.

In what ways can we use our words to encourage and build each other up in Christ?

Question  
# 5

## Instruct

Second, the **Spirit** will lead us to sing and make melody in our heart to the Lord. Here, the **Spirit** unites us in genuine and sincere worship. During the first century, the **heart** was the center of a person's being and thought rather than the primary seat of emotion as we use the term today. This doesn't discount emotion in worship, but instead focuses on the genuineness of the heart. Sometimes people will go through the outward motions of worship, but inwardly they haven't prepared or it has simply become a mindless activity done out of habit. They merely go through the ritual act of worship rather than engage in a sincere expression of devotion **to the Lord**. At other times, however, people feign emotion and exuberant enthusiasm as a show which draws attention to themselves rather than to Christ. If genuine, however, there is nothing wrong with expressing true emotion in worship; in fact, Christ's love for us is often overwhelming and leads to spontaneous outbursts of praise or joyous weeping! At other times, we will also weep in response to God's grace during a genuine act of confession and repentance. The **Spirit**, therefore, helps us to prepare for worship by leading us to confess any sin in our lives and by focusing us upon the exaltation of God's great name and putting everything else out of our minds so that we think about His greatness and goodness alone.

In what ways does the Spirit help us to prepare for worship?

Question  
# 6

Third, the **Spirit** leads us to give **thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Just as we should speak things that edify the body, we must also make sure that we direct our praise to the Lord. We should praise God for who He is and what He has done for us. Frequently, we share our needs with others and ask them to pray for us, but we rarely share how God met those needs. We fail to give Him thanks like the nine

*In every thing give  
thanks: for this is the will  
of God in Christ Jesus  
concerning you.*

1 Thes. 5:18

others lepers whom Christ healed. We should praise God **for all things**. This doesn't mean that we should take delight in the bad or evil things which happen in life, but that we can praise the Lord even in the midst of these trying circumstances. We can praise Him during these trials and tribulations because He has promised to deliver us through them and He will supply all that we need to sustain us when we trust Him! Finally, the **Spirit** will lead us to submit **to one another in the fear of God**. To the modern reader, submission is typically misunderstood as forced subservience which infringes upon one's rights and privileges; therefore, it embodies a weak and helpless individual whom people can dominate. However, this is *not* the biblical idea of submission! In Ephesians, to submit means to put aside our personal preferences and ambitions voluntarily for the sake of the community and the greater cause to which Christ has called us in Him. Moreover, we must understand that this submission occurs within the church between believers. This doesn't mean that we should ignore sin and degradation in society and tolerate it; nor does it mean that we can't seek to address and biblically respond and correct wrongs that have happened to us. On the contrary, it means that we as believers should be unified in one purpose and working together to glorify Christ and expand His kingdom!

What does submission look like in the church when the body is united in the Spirit?

Question  
# 7

We live in a culture that is very much self-centered and focuses on the rights and privileges of individuals; to some extent, this mentality has crept into the church. Many people want to be the center of attention and make decisions that benefit themselves regardless of how they may affect others. This is both distracting and destructive to the body! Christ must be our sole focus and the center of our worship and service. In the church, it shouldn't be about getting one's way, but rather about honoring Christ and pleasing Him. More aptly, it's not about Christ being on "our side," but about us joining Him in His work and being on His. Although God has given us different roles and gifts and called us to serve in distinct positions, no one is more important or valuable in the body than anyone else. Therefore, we must see our ministry and cooperation with others in the body through the eyes of Christ which will help us focus on the task rather than our preferences.

In what ways do we see self-centeredness in the church today?

Question  
# 8

Even though God has called us to submit **to one another** out of respect (i.e. **fear**) for Him, this does not negate the positions of leadership whom He has called to serve in the church. We should not circumvent leadership if we don't get our way or demand that they give in to our requests or that they must utilize our ideas. On the contrary, God has placed human leadership in the church to maintain unity, keep the focus on



Christ, resolve any differences, and allow the community to function cohesively. Ultimately, Christ is the head of the church and we must submit to His direction and authority ([Eph 1:22](#)). So, what does **submitting to one another** look like in terms of the human leadership in the body? The leadership, both full-time vocational ministers and lay people, must put aside their preferences and ambitions and seek Christ. We aren't in competition as leadership and members, but we must work

together for a common purpose. When we seek Christ, understand His will, put aside our preferences, and use our spiritual gifts to function in the role to which He has called us, we will be unified as one body and pursue one goal: to glorify Christ and introduce others into a relationship with Him by sharing the gospel!

In what ways have you seen submission practiced in the church biblically? If you haven't seen it practiced, then how apply what Paul is saying?

Question  
# 9



God has given us all the tools we need to understand His will for our lives collectively as a community and individually. However, we sometimes let the noise of culture and personal preferences drown out His voice—just like Ralph tuned out the GPS in the introduction. When we allow other things to drown out His voice, we will wander through life aimlessly and without purpose. This can create frustration and conflict—especially if we perceive things don't go our way. Life, however, is too short to waste any opportunities that God grants us for ministry. In fact, Paul has already challenged us to make the most of our opportunities by “redeeming the time, because the days are evil” ([Eph 5:16](#)).

To make the most of every opportunity, we must be sensitive to the leadership of the Spirit. He will guide us through prayer and Scripture if only we would take time to stop and listen to His voice. We shouldn't come to God with an agenda and our own personal expectations about what He should do, but we should see where He is working and join Him. We ought to come to God expecting Him to do great and extraordinary things through us, but this means that we must completely surrender to Him and allow Him to work freely through us. Only when we as individuals submit to the Lord and listen to His voice can we come together collectively to be the community which He has called us to be and do the things that He has commanded us to do. Therefore, let us seek His will and put aside our egos and ambitions, so that He may be magnified and the world may be transformed through the proclamation of the gospel to which He has called us as His people.

## ***Incorporate***

How can we as a community know the will of the Lord for us? Biblically, how would you describe His will for us at FBCFW?

What role does the Holy Spirit play in ensuring our unity as a community?

How have you seen unity practiced here in our community? What are some ways in which we can be more unified as a community?

# ***Journal: Document God's Work***

*April 28, 2019*



# *A Word to Women in the Community*

## *Ephesians 5:22-33, Part 1*

Focal Verse:

“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.”

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Ephesians 5:33

## Introduce

Like much in our society, the roles of a husband and wife in marriage have continued to erode and be greatly misunderstood according to current cultural practices. From the beginning, God had a perfect plan for marriage, but disobedience and sin corrupted the ideal and destroyed society. God has always intended marriage to be between one man and one woman for life in order to create a stable society in which to raise children. For this reason, God tasked parents with training their children in His ways and modeling for them so that they mature to become upstanding citizens and productive members of society. Moreover, God designed the home to provide a stable environment in which parents can model the biblical roles of husband and wife, so that their children may know for what they ought to look in a spouse and how they ought to function as a spouse.

To maintain order in society and distribute responsibility within the family, God has assigned distinctive roles for husbands and wives. In terms of value, men and women are equal in Christ; even more important, we have equal access to our Savior and the salvation that He offers through His sacrificial death ([Gal 3:28](#)).



Being equal in Christ, however, doesn't negate the God-given roles He has ordained specifically for husbands and wives; in addition, these roles don't make either party any more or any less valuable in the eyes of Christ. He has given us these roles, so that we might have a healthy family which functions in the way He intended from the beginning.

When we don't practice these roles in the biblical way in which God specified, it leads to disharmony, confusion, and dysfunction. The quickest way to bring ruination on a society is to destroy the family and distract its members from seeing God's true purpose. Culture does not determine the make-up, purpose, and value of the family; neither does it dictate what the roles are for individual members. God determines all these things! Marriage and its specific roles found in Scripture are not old-fashioned or out-of-touch as culture would have us believe. Conversely, God's plan for the family is



## Introduce

timeless and perfect if only we would seek to understand and follow it. Over the course of the next three weeks, we will examine the roles which God has established for wives, husbands, parents, and children. Let us look at these roles through the eyes of Christ guided by the Holy Spirit and not the eyes of culture. God has endowed the family with structure and given us the Spirit to guide us in its application—if only we would “be filled with the Spirit” and completely surrender to Him ([Eph 5:18](#)). When Adam and Eve failed to fulfill their roles as husband and wife in their obedience to the Lord, they brought a curse upon the family and future generations. In Christ, we have been freed from that curse, but its effects remain in the world and weigh heavily on all families—even families who follow Christ. Therefore, let us seek to understand God’s ideal plan for marriage and return to practice the institution in the way God designed from the beginning, so we can grow stronger and more mature as a functional community.

Key  
Question

Based on Scripture, what distinctive roles did God design for wives in marriage?

### Ephesians 5:22-24

#### **A GOD-GIVEN ROLE:**

Before we begin to discuss the role of the wife in marriage, we must first understand how the Greek functions to tie together [Ephesians 5:18-21](#) and [5:22-33](#). Although it may appear in English that verses 19-21 issue commands about how the community should relate to one another to accomplish “the will of the Lord,” the only actual verb and command is to “*be filled with the Spirit*” (5:18b). As a result, the command to “be filled with the Spirit” governs this entire section which outlines how relationships

should function in the community (5:19-21), in marriage between husbands and wives (5:22-33), in the home between parents and children ([6:1-4](#)), and in society between employees and employers ([6:5-9](#)). Therefore, the key to any successful relationship as a believer is to submit completely to the Holy Spirit, follow His perfect plan, and allow



Him to keep us focused on Christ rather than our personal preferences or agendas. When we allow the Spirit to fill our lives and assume control, we will become less self-centered and more like Christ and understand that true love makes sacrifices and cares for the needs of others, so that we will fulfill our God-given role in our relationships as God has always intended.

What does a Spirit-filled relationship look like in marriage?

Question  
# 1

This week we will examine the role of **wives** in a marriage filled by the Holy Spirit and based upon God’s divine plan for the family. Let us agree as we proceed to focus on Scripture and put aside any cultural understanding or practices that may obscure our God-given roles as men and women and hear God speak. In this passage, Paul

## Instruct

discusses two primary roles which God has given **wives**: to **submit to** their **own husbands** (vv. 22-24) and to **respect** them (v. 33). Specifically, God's plan tells us that **wives** should **submit to their own husbands as to the Lord**. Because culture has completely misunderstood submission and labeled it as negative without understanding the correct biblical context, let's first discuss what it is *not*. Godly submission does *not* mean enslavement where the husband can feel entitled to being served without also serving his wife. In a Christ-centered marriage, both individuals should serve each other and look out for the interests of the other as God leads. Just as Christ came not to be served, but to serve, each person should look for opportunities to serve the other ([Mark 10:45](#)).

In addition, submission does *not* mean that the husband will make all the decisions without consulting his wife. By



reminding the Ephesians of [Genesis 2:24](#) where the couple "shall become one flesh," he emphasizes the need to act in unity as one; through prayer and by reading Scripture, the couple must decide together how God is directing them as a family unit. God speaks to both the husband and the wife. He never creates strife and discord in marriage by calling spouses in two different directions; when this happens, we must make sure we aren't acting on our own preferences and agenda. Although it sometimes takes one spouse longer than the other to discern God's direction, we can't rush to make decisions and must continue to seek God as a couple until He gives both partners clarity. Because marriage is a marathon as is life in general, we don't have to sprint to make decisions!

Why is it important to make decisions together by seeking the Lord?

Question  
# 2

Moreover, biblical submission does not devalue or degrade women, but rather it treasures them by seeing their value through Christ. For example, Scripture tells us that “he who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord” ([Prov 18:22](#)). As we will learn more fully next week, a husband who truly has the perspective of Christ will love his wife, care for her, and provide for her ([Eph 5:25-29](#)). This doesn’t mean that a wife can’t care or provide for herself, but rather it demonstrates how much her husband loves and treasures what God has graciously given him. Moreover, the husband will see her potential through the perspective of Christ; therefore, he will supplement her weaknesses and complement her strengths. When a husband sacrificially loves his wife, leads her (and the family) to seek the Lord, and desires what’s best for her, submission becomes a natural response to God’s design for marriage because the couple will act as one body with a single purpose.

In what ways can a husband demonstrate the value of his wife?

Question  
#3

Having understood what submission *is not*, we can now turn to a discussion of what submission *is* from a biblical perspective. Submission describes a unique bond between a wife and her husband—a bond which no other man can fulfill. In the context, God instructs **wives** to **submit to** their **own husbands** not to all men (v. 22). Certainly, men and women should show respect to everyone, but a wife only submits to her husband in addition to the governing authorities whom God has placed over us all—whether in secular society or the church. In fact, we should all submit to the leaders whom God has granted charge over us ([Rom 13:1](#); [1 Pet 2:13-14](#)). When we have the proper perspective in marriage, we can have healthy relationships with others without crossing boundaries. This enables us to remain faithful and devoted to our spouses by maintaining and exercising our responsibilities to them. In the same way, our relationship with Christ is unique and we **as the church** are **subject to** Him (v. 24). When we remain devoted and faithful to Him alone, we can also have healthy and productive relationships with others in the way He designed.

Moreover, submission shows devotion to the Lord by acknowledging and practicing His plan for the family which provides order and stability. As we will learn next week, God has called the husband to lead the household spiritually and create an environment which cultivates a relationship with the Lord. Paul, therefore, explains that **the husband is head of the wife** just like **Christ is head of the church** (v. 23); consequently, **wives**

## Instruct

ought to **be subject to their own husbands in everything** (v. 24). This design for marriage is inherent within creation itself. From the moment God created man and paired him with woman as his counterpart ([Gen 2:18](#)), He had a perfect structure for the family in mind. When husbands fulfill their God-given role by leading the family and protecting them from the destructive deceitfulness of sin, **wives** can trust that they have their best interest at heart and will naturally submit to God's plan as carried out through marriage. The same occurs in the **church** when we understand that **Christ** has our best interests at heart; we can trust and follow Him wherever He leads. The relationship between **Christ and the church** provides a perfect picture for us to follow in marriage, but it also sets high standards for each person to fulfill his or her role in the way He intended from the beginning.

Although Paul is addressing believers here in Ephesians, we can further observe the inherent order in God's structure for marriage when Peter bids wives to "be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by [your] conduct . .

. when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear" ([1 Peter 3:1-2](#)). In order to point their husbands to Christ, believing **wives** should function in marriage according to the standards God has outlined in His Word. When Paul says wives ought to **be subject in everything**, however, he doesn't mean that they should

Wives, submit  
yourselves unto your  
own husbands, as it is  
fit in the Lord.

Col. 3:18

participate in things which are sinful and wrong. Just as with human governments, **wives** should obey God and His Word rather than man when it comes to matters of sin. God never wants us to practice sin under any circumstance. In fact, how would practicing sin point an unbelieving husband to Christ? If the unbelieving husband does not ask the wife to participate in something wrong, then she should **be subject to him in everything** just as God has designated in hopes of leading him to a relationship with Christ.

Consequently, to **submit** to one's husband means that a wife allows him to lead the



family to seek the will of the Lord and glorify the Savior by placing Him first in their marriage. Unfortunately, some husbands don't fulfill their God-given role because we live in a fallen world subject to sin. Yet, **wives** can still surrender to the Lord and **submit** to their husbands by praying for them in specific ways. They can pray that their husbands will 1) seek the will of the Lord and lead as He designed, 2) have the wisdom of the knowledge of the Lord manifest in their lives, 3) be protected from the snares of sin, and 4) remain focused on Christ. To be clear, submission does not entail physical or mental abuse ever in any situation! God never tolerates this kind of lifestyle and His Word values women as we have already seen; therefore, women should not subject themselves to relationships that can bring harm upon them.

In what other ways can wives pray for their husbands?

Question  
# 4

Throughout this section, Paul compares the relationship between a husband and a wife with that of **Christ and the church**. We often miss this aspect and focus on marriage. However, this comparison can prove quite instructive because it can demonstrate what submission requires. First, it requires good communication and intimacy in which a wife knows her husband well and vice versa. Christ desires this with the church and wants a daily conversation through prayer and intimacy in knowing Him through Scripture. Marriage needs meaningful conversations rather than superficial ones. Through a meaningful conversation, we must learn to communicate our needs rather than assuming our spouse recognizes them and understands. We must also learn to share our joys and triumphs along with our struggles and burdens. Moreover, we must learn to communicate and resolve differences biblically. We can't be selfish, but must do what honors Christ and is best for the family. Second, submission requires trust in the Lord to accomplish His plan regardless of the circumstances. Although man may fail at times, God will never fail and we can always trust Him. Ultimately, Paul urges **wives to submit as to the Lord**



## Instruct

(v. 22). Submission, therefore, doesn't depend upon what a husband does or doesn't do, but it depends upon what God has said in His Word and what He has already done through Christ to remove the curse of sin and disobedience. As a reminder, we aren't talking about sinful practices or abuse, but rather it means that we place God first in the relationship. Above all else, we must seek God first in order to have a viable marriage! In marriage vows, a couple often promises to "forsake all others" and remain faithful to their spouse. In the same way, we must forsake all idols and seek the Lord—even above our spouse. When we seek Him first, all these things will fall into place.

Third, submission requires discernment in seeking how the Lord would have a wife fulfill her role in the relationship from both a biblical and practical perspective. Many people wrongly enter a relationship thinking that they can change the other person—often for the better. The only person which we can change with absolute certainty is ourselves; therefore, we can't consume ourselves with things beyond our control, but instead we should focus on the only person over whom we have absolute control—ourselves. Thus, our question in the relationship should be: What would God have us do and who would He have us be to our spouse? As a result, wives, and husbands for that matter, must discern how God wants them to contribute to the relationship by loving, serving, giving, communicating, etc. When we discern how the Lord would have us to live in our relationship, it may not change the other person, but it will please Him and set a godly example for the rest of the family.

What else does submission require according to the Bible?

Question  
# 5

For singles who sense God's call one day to marry, we must know how to discern the characteristics of a godly man or woman. It's not trial and error where we can live together to figure things out as society would have us believe; God clearly prohibits this in His Word. We can certainly have wholesome fun when dating and get to know one another's interests and passions, but we must also have meaningful and purposeful conversations. First, we need to hear their testimony about their relationship with Christ and also how He's currently working in their lives—we ought not date non-believers ([2 Cor 6:14](#)). Second, we need to observe how they interact

with other people in a variety of settings to establish if they have integrity and are the same they profess to be around us. Third, we need to watch how they serve the Lord through the church. We could continue to list things for which we ought to look in a spouse, but specifically women should seek a man who seeks the Lord first and whose devotion to the Lord shines through his faithfulness and adoration of her. Ask yourself these simple questions: How does he express his faithfulness and glorify the Lord in his life?, Does he pray for you and lead you in prayer?, Does he listen to you and meet your needs sacrificially as Christ so loved the church?, and Does he create an environment in which you both can grow together spiritually as one body who seeks the Lord with all your heart? A man who is worthy of marriage may not perfectly fulfill each one of these categories, but he will seek the Lord first and provide a suitable environment in which you both can grow in Him.



Why is it important to have meaningful conversations and be observant when dating?

Question  
# 6

### ***Ephesians 5:33***

#### ***A RELATIONSHIP OF RESPECT:***

At the conclusion of the passage, Paul issues general instructions to both husbands and wives. He bids wives to show respect to their husbands (v. 33). Wives should respect the position of responsibility and the role with which God has entrusted their husbands. Even more significantly, they should also respect them as a person. Society teaches that we must earn respect, but Scripture does not advocate this view. We may not always agree with others, but God always calls us to respect others because we are all created in His image—we don't have to *earn* respect. Although we should never condone sin in any form, we can still act honorably and civilly toward them just as we

## Instruct

can love them unconditionally. No husband will be perfect and at times in married life spouses will have disagreement, but we ought to treat one another respectfully as Christ treats us.

Wives can render respect unto their husbands in a number of practical ways. First, they should seek to encourage and command their husbands—not falsely, but truthfully according to the qualities and skills that God has given them. They should never belittle, even jokingly, their husbands. Our society does this way too often by portraying men in general as incapable of controlling their desires, ignorant, lazy, inept as a handyman, etc. Even when done jokingly there is an element of one's true feeling behind the statement which often leads to resentment and division. Second, wives should not nag their husbands or attempt to show them up in public. Scripture says, "Better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, than in a house shared with a contentious woman" ([Prov 21:9](#)). For this reason, any discussion or debate that can be perceived as an argument should occur in private—even away from children. We can disagree, but we must disagree respectfully in private and come to an amicable resolution. Although this discussion comes woefully short on discussing all the ways wives can show respect to their husbands, it does give us a starting point for how both husbands and wives can fulfill their God-given roles in marriage which will produce strong families that seek the Lord in all they do!

In what other ways can wives show respect to their husbands?

Question  
# 7

For those of us who were fortunate to be raised in a home where our parents modeled the way God intended marriage to function or have the privilege of knowing godly couples, we have a good model to follow. If we didn't have this privilege, it doesn't mean that we can't be that model for someone else. Society in general has devalued and even confused what marriage should be and how it should look. Yet, in our community here at FBCFW we have godly examples who have successfully applied God's design for marriage—some of whom have been married more than seventy years!

God has given us a clear plan for a successful marriage if only we would place Him first in our lives and allow Him to work through us to accomplish that plan. From the beginning, God created the family to bring order to society and united husbands and wives as one body, so that they would have a counterpart who would complement and help them by walking through life together. God knows each one of our needs and He has graciously given many of us a spouse with whom we can journey through life. If He hasn't yet, we should not be in a rush, but allow Him to direct our paths and lead us to the right one based on biblical qualifications. In the meantime, God has given us a church family here at FBCFW who loves us and will journey through life with us as we serve together. Psalm 68:6 states, "God sets the solitary in families; He brings out those who are bound into prosperity; but the rebellious dwell in a dry land."

As we have learned this week and will continue to see next week when we study "The Responsibilities of the Husband in the Community," God has called us to specific roles in marriage as well as the community (i.e. [Eph 4:11-16](#)). These are not suggested roles which change with the time, but they represent God's design for marriage from the beginning. Each of the points and practical applications that we have studied with regard to the roles of wives to submit and respect their husbands have come straight from the pages of Scripture. These roles are not determined or defined by mankind or society, but by God Himself. When we understand the true intention of the roles God has given us, we can have successful marriages which abide by Scripture and seek the Lord first. No marriage is perfect and apart from seeking the Lord first it will be even further from perfect. Therefore, let us practice the biblical roles that God has given us, so that we may bring Him honor and glory and have a strong society built upon the principles which God has intended from the start.



## ***Incorporate***

Why must we practice the roles that God has given husbands and wives in marriage?  
What are the consequences when we don't?

How does marriage and family affect the church? How can the church be more effective in teaching the scriptural qualifications and practical application for marriage?

Why is it important for children to see God's intended plan for marriage practiced in the home?

## ***Journal: Document God's Work***

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