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SENIOR PASTOR

MAY
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,

Paul in his letter to the Ephesians gives instruction on what the Christian walk (life and conduct) should look like. In particular, he has given divine guidance for what the relationship/roles in the family (husbands/wives, parents/children) should look like as followers of Christ. It is critical that we have strong families in the church, with husbands and wives fulfilling their roles as described by Paul under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Someone has rightly said our church will only be as strong as its weakest family. We also find in these instructions what we should practice and what we should forsake. Unless we come to a place where we implement God's instructions for us in our lives, we won't see change. We cannot allow it to become just head knowledge, but it must become a change-agent in our lives.

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.

Let me challenge you as a follower of Christ to read and study these lessons. Ask the Lord to speak to your heart about areas that need to be changed in your walk. Once revealed, submit yourself to God's plan and live His way.

-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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May 5, 2019

**Responsibilities for Husbands
in the Community**

[Ephesians 5:22-33](#), Part 2

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May 12, 2019

**Rearing Children
in the Community**

[Ephesians 6:1-9](#)

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May 19, 2019

**Responding to Adversity
against the Community**

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May 26, 2019

**Remaining Vigilant
in the Community**

[Ephesians 6:18-24](#)

May 5, 2019



*Responsibilities for Husbands
in the Community
Ephesians 5:22-33, Part 2*

Focal Verse:

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.”

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Ephesians 5:25

Introduce

Last week, we examined the God-given role for wives in marriage and this week we will focus on God's expectations for husbands. To function in the way in which God intended, husbands should lead the family to seek the Lord above all else. As the "head of the wife," the husband should set the example for others in the household to follow along with establishing an environment conducive to spiritual growth. In this way, the husband functions like Christ in His relationship to the church where He serves as an example to be imitated ([Eph 5:1-2](#)) and provides the environment in which every member can grow and mature in Him ([Eph 5:26-27](#)). Although each member is responsible to participate in his or her own spiritual growth, Christ provides both the means and the opportunity.

Moreover, Paul calls husbands to love their wives sacrificially just as Christ so loved the church and gave His life for us. Although sacrificial love can take many forms as we shall see in this lesson, it reminds me of one story in particular.

In the 1996 fictional movie *Twister*, it opens with a tornadic thunderstorm bearing down upon a rural farm in the Plains where a man hurriedly rushed his wife and daughter into the safety of a storm cellar. As they ran, the winds blew the rain horizontally and when the lightning flashed it lit the circular



debris cloud of the most-violent category of tornado. With the family inside the cellar, the hinges on the door began to bang as the screws loosened, causing the door to shake and rattle furiously. The farmer lunged toward the door to secure it by tugging on the latch, but alas the wind became too strong and sucked him into the vortex. He had given his life to protect his family.

Sacrificial love doesn't always entail giving one's physical life, but it does mean that we should willingly lay aside anything that we have for the benefit of our families—even if that means risking our lives to save theirs. God has given husbands the greatest responsibility to lead their wives by lovingly providing and caring for them in the way that Christ provides for the church. This is a monumental task to be sure, but it's

Introduce

not impossible when we surrender to Christ and seek Him first. For this reason, Paul spends much more time detailing the God-given responsibilities of the husband in this passage than he does the wife. The husband doesn't function as a dictator or tyrant, but in Christ he functions as His ambassador and liaison to the family to keep them on course by reading Scripture, praying, and serving together. To have a successful marriage and healthy family, both the husband and wife must surrender to the Spirit and allow Him to direct their paths ([Eph 5:18](#)). When we surrender to the Spirit and engage in our God-given roles as husbands, we will have stronger families devoted to the Lord because they will have an earthly example of what it means to imitate Christ which they can see in our lives. Therefore, husbands should exercise their God-given responsibilities in marriage to lead them as a couple closer to Christ by making Him the priority in everything.

Key
Question

What responsibilities has God given the husband in marriage?

Ephesians 5:23-24, 26-27

THE RESPONSIBILITY TO LEAD:

In explaining the structure of the home, Paul compares the relationship between **Christ** and **the church** to that of the **husband** and the **wife** (v. 23). Just as **Christ is head of the church**, so also are husbands **head of the wife**. Like the word “submit” which we studied last week, much debate has centered around the word **head** in this context. Paul has already described Jesus as “head over all things to the church” ([Eph 1:22; 4:15](#)). Christ, therefore, has been given authority by the Father to exercise leadership over the church in all areas. For this reason, Paul notes that God the Father “put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head.” In the same way, God has invested the **husband** with the authority and responsibility to lead his wife toward a relationship with Him. We shouldn’t misunderstand the word **head** as a dictatorship where one must do as the other one says. On the contrary, it’s the responsibility of the husband to lead his wife by providing, protecting, encouraging, guiding, and assisting her as they go through life together in unity as one body.

At creation, God had specifically placed Adam in the midst of the garden and instructed him to care for it ([Gen 2:15-17](#)). Part of that responsibility would have been to lead

his wife to do the tasks the Lord had given them and to keep the boundaries which He had established for them. Although Adam couldn’t force Eve to obey the Lord, he should have established a spiritual environment in which they as a couple sought unity to abide by God’s will together. When temptation came in the form of a crafty serpent,



however, the Bible notes that Adam was there “with her,” but it never records any objection on his part or any attempt to persuade his wife to honor God through their obedience ([Gen 3:1-6](#)). Adam failed. He took the fruit of which God commanded them not to eat and ate after she did, subjecting the entire world to the curse of sin and

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death ([Rom 5:12](#)). Neither Adam nor Eve lived up to their God-given responsibilities. In the New Testament, we can clearly see God's original plan for the family through Christ who has removed the curse which Adam has brought upon the entire world and restored those who have a relationship with Him to righteousness. Based on its root in the Greek, the word "submit" means "to order under" and paired with the word **head** in this context it signifies God's intended design for marriage, so that the home will function properly. To function properly, God has placed great responsibility upon the husband to lead the couple to seek Him first. When the couple doesn't function in unity as one body and both try to lead as individuals, it creates strife and tension in the home. Comparing marriage to leadership in the church in this passage helps us to understand this dynamic more clearly. Even though **Christ is head of the church** and we as members should seek Him above all else, God has designated the overseer or pastor to lead the church to remain focused on Christ and be united in ministry for one purpose. It creates chaos and confusion in the body when the members act according to their own personal agenda without following the leadership which God has put into place. The same happens in marriage when the husband and wife don't abide by the structure God has put into place from the very foundation of society.

In what ways has God given the husband the task to lead his wife (and family)?

Question
1

As Paul develops the analogy of the church as a bride and Christ as the husband, we see two unique things which a human husband cannot do for his wife. First, Christ functions as **the Savior of the body** who specifically came to earth to die sacrificially on the cross to remove our sin and give us eternal life (v. 23). Only Christ can save; only through the gift He offered in His death and resurrection can we freely attain life by grace through faith. A husband cannot "save" his wife by proxy, but rather it is an individual choice she must make. Second, Christ came to **sanctify and cleanse** the church (v. 26). To **sanctify** means to set apart with a purpose; in marriage, the husband and wife are set apart for each other alone for the purpose of being faithful to each other and united as one body whereby they can glorify Christ together. God has set the church apart as both Jew and Gentile who come together for the purpose of glorifying Him in everything (vv. 30-32).

Paul further explains that Christ washes the church with **the water of the word** in

order to **present her to Himself without spot or wrinkle** and to **be holy and without blemish** (v. 27; see [Eph 1:4](#)). When he declares that Christ cleanses the church with the **washing of water of the word**, he is not referring to baptism, but to salvation in which Christ forgives our sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness ([1 John 1:9](#)).

Word in this context points to the Scripture or gospel—which is the vehicle through which God has declared His message of salvation unto us. When we respond to the message of the gospel by faith



and repentance, Christ cleanses our hearts and forgives our sins, thereby making us pure and holy in Him. For example, in [Ezekiel 36:35](#), the prophet records that the Lord “will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.” Upon our salvation, we immediately have life in Christ, but it requires the rest of our physical lives to learn how to walk in righteousness as Christ Himself does. Sanctification, therefore, refers to the life-long process where Christ conforms us into His image through the Holy Spirit.

In what ways does Christ shape our lives to match His through His Spirit? In what ways does Christ call us to participate in the process of sanctification?

Question
2

Although a husband cannot save or **sanctify** his wife as Christ does the church, the husband can still cultivate an environment in which they can grow in maturity as a couple in Christ so that they might glorify Him together through their holy service. A husband can cultivate this attitude and environment in three primary ways. First, husbands should *establish* a consistent time for daily devotion and prayer with his wife and by extension with his family. Unfortunately, we live in an age where people make too many commitments which often unintentionally overshadow the importance of their relationship with Christ and growth together as a family. Families rarely sit down to eat dinner together let alone to pray and seek wisdom in God’s Word. We can’t have any more meaningful conversation with our wives and children than when we seek

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God's wisdom in Scripture, pray in unison to our Savior, and apply His principles in our lives as we grow together. Although it's important to spend time together as a family, it's even more important to communicate and spend time with our spouse in God's Word and in prayer. Because children shouldn't determine the structure and schedule of the household, a husband and wife must spend quality time together discussing matters of importance from a biblical perspective—whether it's where God will lead them to serve as a family, how to raise and discipline their children, and even significant matters that arise in their own relationship in particular. Husbands must lead them to seek the Lord in all things.

Why is it important for a husband and wife to have a regular time to communicate and discuss things?

Question
3

Second, husbands should create an environment in which their family can grow in Christ by *encouraging* them to serve the Lord together. Many families attend church on Sunday morning where they drop off their children for Sunday School only to see them



again after the morning worship. Others drop off their children on Wednesday evenings essentially for childcare. This should never be the case! God expects us to look for opportunities to serve Him every day—not just on Sundays or Wednesdays. He expects us to serve Him as a family. Certainly, age-appropriate classes and curriculum have a tremendous

impact upon children, but families fail when they don't serve in projects together which impact the community and share the gospel with the hopeless. Children learn best by seeing service and commitment modeled. Parents must model authentic service for their children. Therefore, just like in the Garden of Eden, God tasked husbands with leading their families to represent Him and serve all creation as He leads. As a result, husbands must take the initiative to lead their family to serve and to model service in

the church for them to see.

Third, husbands should *exemplify* Christ and be an example for their families to follow; thus, they should live as servant-leaders. Husbands should lead their families just as Christ came to earth to serve and model service for us to follow. In [Ephesians 5:1](#) and passages like [Philippians 2:5](#), we have been commanded to pattern our lives after our Lord and Savior. In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul even says, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” Although we should all model Christ’s holiness and love in our lives, it becomes especially important for the husband whom God has endowed with responsibility to lead the home. When husbands live as Christ, their wives and families can see a consistent pattern which exudes love, grace, mercy, and holiness. Because of this consistency, they can feel confident and secure in their relationship, trusting their spouse desires the best for them as a couple in the Lord. Trust, however, shouldn’t lead to complacency, but it should be a life-long pursuit which constantly drives the couple to mature in Christ. Every relationship requires work and needs purpose and direction. Fortunately, Christ has given us that purpose and direction, calling husbands, and all Christians for that matter, to model servant-leadership, faithfulness, obedience, integrity, wisdom, and righteousness for our families to follow—just as when Joshua emphatically declared, “Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve . . . But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” ([Josh 24:15](#)). He lived out this declaration among his family and nation by faithfully following the Lord and trusting in Him alone! Let us also do the same among our family and nation.

In what ways should husbands provide a spiritual example to follow in the home?

Question
4

Ephesians 5:25, 28-33

THE RESPONSIBILITY TO LOVE:

Next, Paul instructs **husbands** to **love** their **wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her** (v. 25). This stands in stark contrast to the general first-century secular view of women. Not that every husband at that time failed to **love** his wife or treated her as property, but Scripture clearly shows the depth of **love** husbands should have for their wives in loving them sacrificially. Sacrificial **love** may entail risking one’s life for his wife, but it also means that we must cast aside all selfishness and personal ambition to see her value and do what’s best as a couple. Christ saw our value to the Father and He gave His best for us by dying in our place so that we might be

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restored in our relationship with Him. In this way, **love** is not a mere emotion that shifts and changes, but it never fades or fails ([1 Cor 13:8](#)); it is constant and consistent. As an emotion, the world tells us that we can fall in and out of love, but in Christ sacrificial **love** is a state of being. We don't fall in and out of **love**, but we *are love*! In every situation, we demonstrate **love** by exemplifying or imitating Christ.

Having commanded **husbands** to **love** their **wives**, Paul lists specific ways they can achieve this. In verse 28, he declares that **husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies**. He further clarifies that being united into one body (**flesh**) means that the one **who loves his wife** also **loves himself**—not in a selfish or conceited way, but he desires the best for them as a couple (see [Gen 2:24](#)). Hence, Paul explains that **no one ever hated his own flesh**, rather he **nourishes it and cares for it** as



Christ **does the church** (v. 29). In the church, we express our love for the Lord by loving and serving one another; putting aside differences in our personalities, perspectives, and plans, we unite as one body for the purpose of fulfilling one goal—to glorify the Lord and to grow together in Him. Marriage is the same. Two distinct individuals come together with different personalities,

perspectives and plans to unite in Christ and grow together in Him. Thus, **just as in the church**, marriage should not be about *me*, but about *Him* (Christ) and how we can worship and serve Him in the way in which He has taught us. However, too many individuals in marriage, like **the church**, focus on themselves, rather than how they can be like Him (Christ) and serve one another in **love** and holiness.

How can we overcome selfishness displayed in the church and in a marriage?

Question
5

With Christ as the pattern for **love**, we can identify at least three specific ways that **husbands ought to love their wives**. First, a husband should provide for his wife. The word translated **nourishes** means to feed or provide sustenance. Certainly, a husband

should provide for his wife and family physically, but he should also provide in so many more ways. He should provide his presence through genuine companionship in which he is there to support her and encourage her in both the good times and difficult ones. He should also work hard to provide a quality life, but what good do wealth and possessions do if the husband concentrates on work and never spends time with his family? In the same way, Christ showed **love** for us by gracing us with His physical presence and coming in the flesh of man to dwell among us; indeed, He still wants to spend quality time with us so much that He didn't leave us as orphans, but sent His Spirit to live within us. Likewise, husbands should provide for their wives as God leads and gives opportunity—not because she can't provide for herself, but because he loves her sacrificially as Christ does us all.

In what other ways can husbands show sacrificial love by providing for their wives?

Question
6

Second, a husband should protect his wife. The word translated **cherishes** means generally to care for and in one instance to care for by providing warmth; in terms of one's body, it would mean to protect it against warmth and cold by utilizing proper clothing. Although a husband may be required at times to protect his wife and family physically, it more frequently pictures providing her with stability and security in the relationship. Along with this comes implicit trust. She knows he has her best interest at heart and she can come to him at any time and in any situation, understanding that he will support her and guide her in the Lord according to what Scripture says. She will have the confidence that he loves her alone and won't cheat or look at others with lustful thoughts. A husband should respect his wife by giving her his undivided attention to listen to her concerns, rejoice with her in her triumphs, encourage her when she feels defeated, support her when she needs strength, supplement her in her weakness, and assist her in becoming the most godly woman she can be by constantly pointing her to the Lord.

In what ways can a husband provide protection for his wife that gives her a feeling of security and stability?

Question
7

Third, a husband should guide them as a couple to seek the wisdom of the Lord through the Spirit in Scripture. The husband shouldn't see himself as a problem solver and try to "fix" everything. In reality, when we seek Christ, He will provide the

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solution and grant us wisdom to resolve any problem which we may encounter. As a team, that is **one flesh**, the couple must seek the Lord together. This requires good



communication in which they journey through life together. Both need to be good communicators as well as listeners; they need to know one another intimately and share everything in common. They should have no secrets, but face both victory and adversity in life together. Too many marriages fail because individuals never give up their individual pursuits

to seek the Lord first and then each other. Many today attempt to live their own lives individually according to their interests and passions rather than as one body in Christ. This, coupled with the lack of communication, creates a hardship in pursuing a life-long relationship with someone when we have multiple goals and divided attention. Seek the Lord first and then each other to be unified in Him in everything!

In what ways does a lack of communication hinder a relationship? How should we communicate so that we grow together as a couple in Christ?

Question
8

Unfortunately, this brief study can't even begin to scratch the surface on such a complex relationship as marriage. Fortunately, however, we have a perfect example to follow in how Christ relates to us as the church. Society may tell us that these roles in marriage are old-fashioned, out-of-date, and out-of-touch with reality and even derogatory toward women. On the contrary, when applied biblically, these roles are freeing and instructive because they show God's perfect plan for the family. What we have discussed the last two weeks isn't a collection of wisdom from man, but it comes from the infallible, inerrant, and inspired Word of God which is good for all time. God's plan is always best! Therefore, as husbands or potential husbands let us be the men whom God has called us to be; let us lead our families to seek the Lord and love our wives sacrificially as Christ so loved us.

Many of the classic televisions that people often mock and derisively refer to as out-of-date like *Leave It to Beaver*, *Father Knows Best*, and *Happy Days*, featured husbands and fathers who led their families and loved their wives. Certainly, life is more complicated than a sitcom which can face tough problems and resolve them successfully in thirty minutes, but we can learn something from these shows about relationships. The men were present, involved, and invested with their families—which is what God has desired and designed from the beginning. God didn't want Adam to stand there aloof and do nothing as the serpent spiritually attacked his wife. He wanted Adam involved! He wanted him to act! God desires the same for men today. He wants us involved and active in our families, pointing them to Him.

It isn't enough for men to go to work to provide for his family only to come home and do nothing. Husbands certainly should provide for the physical needs, but they must also serve as an example of the love and leadership of Christ. Christ has given men much responsibility in the relationship and an extremely high bar to follow as imitators of His love! If God has given us the blessing of a wife and family, we ought to treasure that privilege and work daily to be the best leader in the home He has called us to be. Being a husband and father is a twenty-four / seven job. Although it can be taxing and tiring at times, it is also rewarding and fulfilling in Christ. More importantly, if God has called us to a certain role with specific responsibilities as husbands, He Himself will give us strength and wisdom and equip us with the necessary tools to do our best. We need to rely on Him! Therefore, let us follow Christ's example in loving our wives sacrificially and leading our homes spiritually, so that we may glorify the Lord in all we do.

Incorporate

In what ways does the relationship between Christ and the church reflect the best example for a relationship between a husband and wife? What can we learn from Christ that we can apply in our marriages?

In what ways has God called husbands to provide spiritual leadership in the home?

Why is a husband's presence and availability important to the home? In what ways can we spend quality time with our families and in particular with our wives?

Journal: Document God's Work

May 12, 2019



Rearing Children in the Community

Ephesians 6:1-9

Focal Verse:

“And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”

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Ephesians 6:4

Introduce

Although we will address a number of topics this week in Paul's concluding remarks on relationships in the family as well as in secular society particularly in the business world, we will concentrate on the importance of fathers in raising their children in this introduction. After all, Paul does address his comments to "fathers" in Ephesians 6:4 when he tells them "not [to] provoke [their] children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." This doesn't discount the mother's role in helping to raise children, but it does demonstrate God's plan to have both parents actively involved in raising and teaching their children together. Moreover, these remarks shouldn't be misconstrued as belittling the effort required by single parents to raise their children in a godly home, but it shows the value of fathers in taking an active role in responsibly rearing their children.

In a 2017 article published in *USA Today*, Sean Rossman declares, "An involved father's impact is more than a few good stories, notable quips and hard-learned lessons. Science has proven he's worth more." In the article, he references statistics which

indicate that those with fathers involved in their lives have healthier relationships because they have established boundaries and expectations, they do better in school because they have more structure, and they are less likely to be involved in illegal activities or undertake things detrimental to their own health and well-being. In fact, Dr. Gail Gross, a



human behavior expert writing for the *Huffington Post*, agrees that a "child's primary relationship with his/her father can affect all of [the] child's relationships from birth to death . . . Those early patterns of interaction with a father are the very patterns that will be projected forward into all relationships . . . forever more." Even though I do not agree with every aspect of these secular articles, especially the things which they discuss that are contrary to Scripture, they still serve to show how important and indispensable fathers are in rearing their children—even from a *secular* perspective!

Unfortunately, we live in a society in which people frequently fail to act responsibly

Introduce

and, even more harmfully, to live by the standards which God has outlined in His Word. Fathers many times fail to take an active role in teaching and investing in their children. They may not be physically absent from the home in some cases, but they are absent in the lives of their children. Regardless of the reasons a father may be absent in the home, investing in children requires presence (availability), persistence, and patience to work toward the goal of introducing them into a relationship with Christ. Consequently, fathers must not see themselves only as providers and enforcers, but as mentors who teach their children and models whom they can see and imitate. A father's presence demonstrates his love for his children as well as provides structure, stability, protection, nurture, encouragement, correction, and guidance for them.

The Bible calls children "a heritage from the Lord" and a "reward ([Psalm 127:3](#)); it never identifies them as a burden or misfortune. As a "heritage from the Lord," those with children have a responsibility to invest in their lives and ultimately point them toward a relationship with Christ —just as the children have the God-given responsibility to honor and obey their parents in the Lord. Although raising children can be challenging in this fallen world where they make unwise and bad choices at times, we can't shirk our responsibility as parents, but we must persist in modeling for them the right way to walk. Therefore, let us train children "in the admonition of the Lord" so that they may know how to have eternal life and make wise choices that will put them in good stead for the rest of their earthly lives.

Key
Question

Why is it important to spend quality time investing in the lives of children as parents?

In Reference



Sean Rossman, "[Why Dads Matter, According to Science](#)," USA Today (June 13, 2017). Gail Gross, "[The Important Role of Dad](#)," Huffington Post (June 12, 2014).

Ephesians 6:1-3

CHILDREN RESPECT YOUR PARENTS:

Having discussed the relationship between husband and wife ([Eph 5:22-33](#)), Paul now turns his attention to the role of **children** by appealing directly to the boundaries which the Lord established in the Ten Commandments. Based on the fifth commandment ([Exod 20:12](#)), Paul instructs **children** to **obey** their **parents in the Lord** because **it is** the **right** thing to do (v. 1). In fact, he emphasizes the importance of the command by explaining it's **the first with a promise that it may be well with** them, so that they **may live long on the earth** (vv. 2-3). Although the subtitle of this section is "Children Respect Your Parents," it entails much more than the typical modern idea of respect; it means that **children** should respect the position and authority of their **parents** by listening to and applying their godly advice and wisdom, by obeying and abiding by the boundaries they set, and by representing them with integrity and honor with how they act.

In what ways should children honor or show respect to their parents?

Question
1

The word translated **obey** comes from the root which means "to listen to" or "heed." Based on Scripture as a whole in conjunction with Paul's teaching in this passage, we can identify three areas in which **children** should **honor** their parents. First, **children**

should *be receptive* to sound advice from their **parents**. In this context, we must remember that Paul is addressing family members who have a relationship with Christ and walk in the Spirit (see [Eph 5:18](#)). As a result, the advice these **parents** give should reflect God's wisdom obtained from Scripture which they have applied practically in life. In many cases, our parents know best because they have walked through the same triumphs and trials that we face; they



Instruct

have also made similar mistakes and experienced similar victories in choosing the right path in life in the same ways we have. Although technology has advanced and society may have changed in many ways, the godly principles which guide life remain the same. We must listen to those who have experience, wisdom, and knowledge to learn from them!

Yet, we live in a society that frequently fails to value experience and often rejects advice from others who have first-hand knowledge. In addition, some think that because they may know a little about a subject that they have become an expert, so they don't need to learn from others who have gone before them. Recently, I ate in a local restaurant which had a sign that captured this very phenomenon well: "Teenagers, if you're tired of being harassed by your parents, get a job, move out, and get on your own while you *still know everything*." God has placed us in families to walk through life together and learn from each other. **Children** and **parents** must have open avenues of communication to discuss life's challenges; we can't isolate our **children** by neglecting our duty and avoiding "uncomfortable" discussions about today's world because if we don't teach and train them then the world will. **Children** may be obstinate, challenging, and even rebellious at times, but our message must remain consistent in the Lord and children must learn to be receptive of the path on which He leads them.

In what ways as parents can we help our children see the value of responding to godly advice?

Question
2

Second, "to listen to" our **parents** means that we should *respond in obedience*. This is perhaps the most-difficult thing to do because even as **children** we value our independence and desire to get our own way. If we often disobey our heavenly Father who loves us unconditionally and has given His best for us, how much more difficult is it to **obey** our earthly **parents** who still love us and want the best for us? As **children**, we may not appreciate our parents' guidance at the time, but when we look back we realize how beneficial the structure and boundaries they set truly were. For example, parents establish a consistent bedtime for their **children** in order to teach the value of proper rest and help them focus productively during the day. Although this consistent bedtime may disappear in college and with some adults, generally it will return when they have a regular job and find out how miserable they feel during the day because

they have stayed up too late doing unproductive things. Because the Lord has invested **parents** with authority, responsibility, and wisdom, **children** should **obey** them because they have their best interest at heart. **Parents** should constantly grow and mature in the Lord and may at times make mistakes, but that doesn't negate the responsibility to follow the boundaries they set and the instructions that they give.

Why is it important as parents to be consistent in the boundaries we set? How does consistency help shape a child's life?

Question
3

Third, we must teach children to *be respectful* at all times. To show respect, we must exhibit unconditional love, integrity, trust, honesty, self-control, and a willingness to forgive and ask for forgiveness. However, respect isn't simply an attitude that we have toward someone; it's who we are and how we represent them by our conduct. For example, we represent our heavenly Father through our conduct as His ambassadors who bear His holy name. Proverbs 22:1 states, "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches; loving favor rather than silver and gold." Therefore, we show respect to our parents by the way that we conduct ourselves both in public and private which brings honor to their name and the way they have raised us, thereby also bringing honor to ourselves by living responsible and holy lives.

To understand respect, **children** must see it modeled in their **parents**. If we argue vociferously, it will teach **children** to talk back and rebel rather than to respond with logic and civil discourse. If we don't honor our word to them or others, it will teach **children** that integrity and truthfulness don't really matter. Consequently, we must model respect in the home to each other by demonstrating what true love looks like to our spouses, by remaining civil and rational during times of disagreement, and by refraining from talking negatively or putting one another down—whether at home or in public. As a result, we need to cultivate a relationship with our **children** where we talk directly with them and not at them or about them; the way and level in which we communicate will largely depend upon their age and maturity, but we must cultivate respect by taking time to address them directly which demonstrates love more than simply being permissive and accommodating.

For example, when some **parents** get around other **parents**, they discuss their **children** even while they are present and can hear. Although some **parents** may legitimately be seeking advice, speaking negatively about their **children** in front of others can unintentionally reinforce bad behaviors or cause even more rebellion.

Instruct

Moreover, it teaches them they have the ability to speak negatively of others or even



engage in unhealthy gossip, especially if **parents** make light of or joke about certain habits or events. Instead, talk directly to your **children** about problems; never put them down or write them off as hopeless in front of others, but encourage, correct, and reinforce biblical principles in a one-on-one situation. We certainly can get advice from other

godly **parents**, but we must be careful what we say, how we say it, and when we say it. **Children** are a treasure from the Lord in whom we must invest, so that we point them to Christ and shape them according to His Word.

How can we model proper respect for our children?

Question
4

Ephesians 6:4

PARENTS REAR YOUR CHILDREN IN THE LORD:

In verse 4, Paul addresses **fathers** specifically by issuing two commands about how they should raise their **children**. First, he cautions them **not to provoke their children to wrath**; second, he commands them to **bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord**. Paul begins by warning **fathers not to provoke** or, literally, arouse them to anger. This directive certainly includes treating **children** harshly or unfairly, but it can also include frustrating them by dealing with them inconsistently or failing to establish clear boundaries. Moreover, it also means that **fathers** should know how to deal with their **children** in a constructive way which fits their personalities—for each child responds differently. Therefore, they must learn the most effective way to encourage, instruct, and even discipline their **children**.

This command against provoking them **to wrath** doesn't mean that **fathers** shouldn't discipline their **children** and allow them to do whatever they want. We shouldn't

equate permissiveness with love, but at the same time it doesn't mean that we can't do nice and loving things for our children either. Moreover, it doesn't mean that we should shirk our responsibilities as parents in lieu of trying to "win" their affection by being their "friend." Too many in our society focus on friendship rather than parenting! We can show respect to our **children** through our love, support, and guidance. We can even allow them at times to participate in the decision-making process, but in the end God has ultimately endowed us with the responsibility to raise, lead, and guide them by establishing boundaries and providing structure for them.

Why is it important to base instruction and correction upon a child's personality and tailor it specifically to him or her?

Question
5

Christ should be the focus of the home, but too often children become the focus—whether intentionally or unintentionally. For example, as **children** grow, think about how *their activities* and schedules dominate the household. Running them to extracurricular activities and social events can strain time and even finances which often comes at the expense of the worship and service of Christ. Nothing is wrong with extracurricular or social activities or even wanting the best for our **children**—unless these



things overshadow Christ. Often, parents with a hectic schedule because of **children** in extracurricular activities that meet on Sundays or Wednesdays miss corporate worship, refrain from volunteering for service projects, and some even allow the cost to determine whether they tithe or not. In addition, family time becomes strained at home and daily devotions and prayer may be placed on the back burner. Certainly, these activities add a richness to our life, but they cannot replace the richness and value of Christ! As a parent, you must set boundaries, you must ensure that you and your family place Christ first, and you must determine how you can manage a schedule which doesn't slight the worship and service of Christ.

We could say much on **training** children **in the admonition of the Lord** and countless

Instruct

books have been written on the subject, but we will concentrate on three main areas. To train them effectively, we must *be clear, be consistent, and be compassionate*. First, we should clearly outline our expectations by setting specific guidelines and boundaries in accordance with Scripture. Our boundaries and expectations may not change as they grow, but the way we communicate them and the responsibilities that we give them will as they mature. In addition, we should clearly explain the consequences for violating the boundaries and the blessing that will come when they abide by them. When we must address an issue with our **children**, whether good or bad, we need to communicate clearly; be specific about what happened, when it happened (deal with it immediately if possible), what the consequences are, and how we should deal with similar situations in the future. Teach all the time! In Scripture, God does the same with us. He has outlined His specific expectations, what will happen if we follow them and if we don't, and how we need to resolve particular situations which we will face during our lives. For example, Deuteronomy serves as a great example: God reminds the people of the boundaries that He set, describes the blessings if they follow them and the curses if they don't, and gives particular case studies so that they know how to apply them.

How can we be clear and effective in communication with our children?

Question
6

Second, we need to provide *consistency* for our children to follow. We need to enforce boundaries and consequences consistently. If we don't, it teaches them they aren't



important and they can be ignored. Consistency also helps them to know expectations and the consequences won't seem arbitrary or unfair. They may complain at times, but they will *know* what to expect. Even more important, we must apply the principles by which we instruct them consistently in our own lives. We must model for them!

The worst instruction we can give **children** is to say one thing and do another. They will tend to imitate what we do rather than what we say. Consequently, we must be consistent in our devotion and service to the Lord; we must spend time with Him daily, we must worship corporately with other believers, we must identify ways to serve Him, and we must abide by the principles which He has directed us in His Word. Therefore, we must not only consistently enforce boundaries with our **children**, but we must be a consistent role model in whom they can see true transformative faith in Christ Jesus. Finally, we must also extend *compassion* to our **children**. We don't usually associate discipline with compassion, but when we correct our **children** and show them the right path it demonstrates much love and compassion. Even God shows us love by disciplining us as His **children** ([Heb 12:5-8](#)). Discipline need not just be harsh, but effective; we must learn what works with each specific child and respond accordingly in a manner that points him to the Lord and teaches him the right path to walk. In addition, compassion both extends forgiveness and seeks restoration. The purpose of discipline should always be restoration—first, to point them to restoration and forgiveness in Christ and second to restore any damaged and dysfunctional human relationships. Showing compassion requires patience and unconditional love—not in the sense of permitting or ignoring sinfulness or disobedience, but to lead them to an understanding of their actions, an acknowledgement of their behavior, and ultimately restoration. Just like God's relationship with us requires time to work through this process, it requires time and commitment to our **children** to do the same with them.

In what ways can we show compassion to our children?

Question
7

Ephesians 6:5-9

EMPLOYEES REPRESENT CHRIST IN EVERYTHING:

In his concluding remarks to the community, Paul addresses the relationships between **bondservants** and **masters** (v. 5). Although he doesn't directly address the institution of slavery itself, he does seek to transform it by starting with the relationships among believers about how we ought to treat one another in the secular community.

Naturally, when we transform individual relationships, it will eventually transform the perspective on the institution as a whole. In fact, Paul's remarks in this section are a radical departure from society's view at the time concerning how **masters** could legally treat their slaves. He goes beyond a mere restatement of the "Golden Rule" which

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declares “whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them” ([Matt 7:12](#)), so he instructs them both to treat one another as Christ has treated us! When we see others through the eyes of Christ, we see their worth and value, but we also see our service and place in Christ. No longer are we enslaved to sin, but we have been set free and have become slaves to Christ in righteousness ([Rom 6:17-18](#)). We should have a whole new perspective in Christ!

Today, Paul’s remarks serve as a reminder how we ought to function in the workplace as employees and employers. Briefly, we can learn three principles which we can apply in our relationships in the workplace. First, he instructs **bondservants** to obey their earthly **masters with fear and trembling in sincerity of heart as unto Christ** (v. 5). Just as we would show respect and reverence unto Christ (see [Eph 5:21](#)), we ought



to show respect and reverence to our employer. This includes simple habits like punctuality, doing things without being asked as we notice tasks which need to be done, and working hard all the time. In addition, it means that we shouldn’t complain or criticize, constantly speaking negatively, but we should do what we are asked in a way that reflects the

character of the Lord. When problems arise or something must be addressed, we do so with respect and humility rather than condescension and demands. We can certainly offer our opinion, at times, but we must remember that the boss or employer makes the final decision, so we need to offer it with the utmost humility.

In what ways can we show respect to our boss or employer?

Question
8

Second, we need to work efficiently and effectively all the time—not just to please the boss when he is looking, but to please Christ who sees **the heart**. Therefore, Paul points out that we don’t work **with eyeservice as men-pleasers**, but we serve with **sincerity from the heart** serving out of **goodwill** which is God’s **will** for us (vv. 6-7).

The word **eyeservice** is rare in Greek and has the connotation that one works only when being watched so that they outwardly appear as a hard worker; however, as the expression goes “when the cat’s away, the mice will play.” Rather, we should work hard all the time—not merely to **please** other **men** and advance our cause through promotion, but to honor the Lord who sees the motives of **the heart**. Moreover, we should also act with integrity in everything in which we are asked to serve. This doesn’t mean that we can and should allow people to take advantage of us and unfairly exploit us, but it means that we must work and serve to the best of our ability so that others may be pointed to Christ!

In what ways should we act with integrity in our jobs whether our boss is watching or not?

Question
9

Finally, because God sees our true motives and intentions, He will judge our actions. Even if our employer doesn’t notice our **good** deeds and hard work—which usually don’t go unnoticed in a world in which people try to do as little as possible to get by—God will notice and our **good** works will be rewarded. When we work hard, efficiently, and effectively, God will reward **whatever good anyone does** (v. 8). Likewise, God does not show **partiality** to bosses who mistreat or verbally abuse (i.e. **threatening**) their employees (v. 9). He also sees and will judge them because we both serve the same **Master!** As believers, people should see a difference in us whether we are an employee or employer. In everything we do, we should value hard work, respect others, and act with integrity and **sincerity** because we represent Christ and want to please Him above all else.

For the last four weeks, we have learned what Spirit-filled relationships should look like in the church, in the home, and in the workplace. Although the various relationships have different nuances and dynamics, they share one thing in common: we should use Christ as our guide and view others through His eyes, treating them with love and respect in order to fulfill His purpose of maturing together in Him as a family. This week we primarily focused on the relationship between parents and children—particularly the importance of having the influence of a godly father. Fathers have an important role in modeling the right path, training them in the teaching of the Lord found in Scripture, nurturing them, encouraging them, and correcting and disciplining them. This takes time and requires enormous responsibility, but God has equipped us with all the skills, tools, and resources we need in His Word, through the leadership of the Spirit, and in His church.

Although the primary responsibility for raising children in “the admonition of the Lord” lies with parents, the church can supplement and reinforce that training. Moreover, the church can also provide solid, biblically-based resources which can aid parents in raising their children, especially when times become difficult. (See the link at the end of this section for more resources our church offers.) However, all-too-frequently many parents depend solely upon the church as the primary source for spiritually training their children. Children need constant guidance and reinforcement; therefore, it is incumbent upon parents to monitor their children and spend time teaching them from Scripture.

Parents shouldn’t be overly controlling in their children’s lives to the point that they live vicariously through them or they live their life for them. On the other hand, they shouldn’t simply allow their children to do whatever they want without boundaries and guidance. Parents have a responsibility to know what their children are being taught in school, who their friends are, and what they view and who they talk to online. Therefore, they must have an open dialogue and communication with their children. Most importantly, however, parents must make time to lead their family in daily devotion—reading Scripture, praying together, and talking about life. This isn’t something that we can rush through or merely put off, but something that should be a part of our lives from adolescence to adulthood. Consequently, let us invest in our children by training and rearing them in the Lord so that they might become godly men and women as He leads and works in their lives.

Incorporate

How can parents cultivate communication with their children? Why is it important to know what's going on in their lives and the situations which they may be facing?

Why is it important that parents be consistent in their walk with Christ in addition to establishing and enforcing boundaries to guide their children?

How does Christ transform our relationships in the workplace?

In Reference



For more information about available resources our church offers, go to <http://www.fbcfw.org/building-blocks-for-the-family>.

May 19, 2019



Responding to Adversity against the Community

Ephesians 6:10-17

Focal Verse:

“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”

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Ephesians 6:11

Introduce

Seven months before the unprovoked attack on Pearl Harbor which propelled the US into World War 2, famed aviator Charles Lindberg pleaded with the American people to remain neutral and not get involved in the war ravaging Europe. In a speech delivered on April 23, 1941 in New York City, he confidently declared, "The United States is better situated from a military standpoint than any other nation in the world. Even in our present condition of unpreparedness, no foreign power is in a position to invade us today. If we concentrate on our own and build the strength that this nation should maintain, no foreign army will ever attempt to land on American shores." However, his vision was short-sighted and indeed the entire Pacific fleet in Hawaii was specifically targeted and attacked while in port on America's shore! If Lindberg,



President Roosevelt, or any other military leader had known with absolute certainty that the Japanese were planning to attack, they would have provided the military with the very best equipment and resources and placed them on high alert.

From intercepted messages and the movement of naval forces in the Pacific to the blip on radar that Sunday morning misinterpreted as a flight of B52's from the West Coast, there were signs that signaled this likely attack. Yet, the US remained unaware and unprepared. It's easy to look back seventy-eight years and see these missed signs, but it's much more difficult when actually facing them for the first time. Unlike this historical reference, we know as believers that we face a spiritual battle every day from an even more-powerful enemy. We have no excuse for being unprepared or caught off guard; God has clearly warned us through Scripture. Moreover, He has outfitted us with the very best armor to withstand the onslaught of the enemy. We have everything we need for success!

We aren't alone in this fight, but God is fighting for us and has even equipped us with His "whole armor" (v. 11). On our own, we can't resist "the wiles of the devil," but with the strength of the Lord upon us we can (v. 10)! Trials, troubles, and temptations may bombard us every day, but we don't have to settle for mediocracy because the victory

Introduce

has already been won by Christ. In fact, Isaiah 52:12 proclaims, “For you shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight; for the Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard.” God both leads us into battle and He protects us by making sure that the enemy doesn’t blindsides us from the rear! Therefore, let us fight the enemy with persistence, with conviction, and with wisdom and knowledge by “putting on the whole armor of God” and allowing Him to guide us daily so that we don’t stumble and fall in the midst of this spiritual battle.

Key
Question

In what ways has the Lord prepared us for this on-going spiritual battle with the enemy?

Ephesians 6:10

BE STRENGTHENED IN THE LORD:

After discussing relationships in the community and family ([Eph 5:19-6:9](#)), Paul encourages the Ephesians to **be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might** (v. 10). He didn't include this statement randomly in this context, but it serves as a good reminder how viciously the enemy attacks the family. If the enemy can derail the family, hinder their growth in the Lord, and create dysfunction, then he can ultimately destroy the community and weaken the church. Just look around us to see the evidence of how the weakening of the family has caused a surge in ungodliness and immorality. As believers, we can't let this continue to happen! We must turn to the Lord and follow Him into battle, so that our families will remain strong despite whatever attacks the enemy may hurl and whatever circumstances may occur. The command to **be** strengthened means that we must completely rely upon the Lord to empower and strengthen us. We aren't called to strengthen ourselves, but the way Paul writes this command indicates that God performs the strengthening for us. When it comes to spiritual warfare, we cannot rely on our own strength or ability; we must rely on God. In addition, the command to **be strong**, along with the other commands in this section, is plural; in other words, Paul commands "you all be strong." In English, we often wrongly emphasize the individual's role in preparing for battle and being equipped for victory, but God is speaking to the community as a whole! God hasn't called us to fight this war alone as individuals, but we should be strengthened, **stand firm** together, and put on God's **full armor** as a community with God leading us into battle. We need each other! We must prepare as individuals and be responsible for our own personal growth, but we must fight side by side as a community.



Why is it important that we fight against the enemy as a community led into battle by the Lord?

Question
1

Instruct

The Old Testament provides the best illustration about how God equips and leads His people into battle to ensure victory. In the first chapter of Joshua, God reminds His people that He will be right there with them and that they can do the impossible because He will go before them into battle. They simply must trust Him and follow the directives He gives. In [Joshua 1:6-18](#), God commands the people no less than four times to “be strong and courageous.” Just as God fought with Israel in these physical, earthly battles, He will also fight with us in our spiritual battles. To ensure our success in this spiritual warfare, God has clearly outlined a battleplan in Scripture (see [Josh 1:8](#)). In fact, He has given us every principle by which we should live. If we follow His plan and surrender to His leadership, then we will experience victory. As a result, God will keep us focused and from drifting off course by enabling us to recognize and avoid the deception of the enemy. Therefore, God won’t leave us defenseless to stand against temptation on our own, but He grants us the ability to overcome and live in righteousness if we would only seek Him first (see [1 Cor 10:13](#)).

As His people, God has placed us in a community so that we can grow together by reminding one another what He has stated in His Word. Therefore, we can glean godly wisdom from others who have experienced similar situations in life and we can pattern our lives after godly examples who model the love and holiness of Christ (see [1 Cor 11:1](#)). Thus, in the community we can find encouragement and even comfort as we navigate life’s experiences together. Moreover, we can find people who will hold us accountable to act with integrity and live as Christ. In a community, we should know one another intimately, so that we can identify our strengths and weaknesses and form a cohesive unit to supplement one another in the Lord. We are all in this battle together! Thus, the proverbial statement “there is strength in numbers” rings true. However, we must remember that our strength comes not from numbers or individuals, but from the Lord who equips and uses us to fight collectively beside Him to overcome sin and evil.

How does God use the community to equip and encourage us for battle?

Question
2

[Ephesians 6:11-13](#)

BE PREPARED FOR BATTLE:

Next, Paul urges the community to prepare by putting **on the whole armor of God**,

so **that** they might **be able to stand against the wiles of the devil** (v. 11) and defend against the enemy. Before anyone rushes into a physical battle, he makes sure he has been outfitted with the best and most-advanced armor. Depending upon the locale of the battle, the soldier will wear camouflage that blends with the environment. Regardless of the mission, he will **put on** a helmet, boots, body armor, and carry with him a gun or some type of offensive weapon. However, we don't face a physical battle, but a spiritual one; as Paul explains, **we don't wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces of wickedness** in this age (v. 12). In many ways, this battle is more difficult than a physical battle and the consequences can be even more serious and deadly, especially for those who die apart from Christ without repenting. As believers, therefore, we must be prepared for battle and not be caught off guard by the craftiness **of the devil**.



What spiritual battles do we face as a community or individuals in the community?

Question
3

Although we will examine the pieces of armor individually in detail in verses 14-17, we can discuss three ways that we can prepare for spiritual battle in general. First, to have success in battle we must have a good vantage point from an elevated position, so that we can survey the entire battlefield and not be surprised by the movement of the enemy. In a spiritual battle, only One individual has such a position in which He can see all history and anticipate the movement and tactics of the enemy with exact precision. As humans, we have finite knowledge and only a limited perspective, but God doesn't! We should seek wisdom and knowledge from Him alone because He knows everything. Because He can see the entire battlefield of history, He will never lead us into an ambush or vulnerable situation. Although persecution and difficult situations may arise at times in life, God will guide us through them; He won't merely send us, but He will show us and lead us. Therefore, to have such a good vantage point, we must adopt God's perspective and apply His wisdom.

Second, we must also ask the Lord to help us develop a strategy for battle. No human general foolishly leads his troops into battle without a tactical plan; in fact, they often

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spend weeks and even months in preparation if time allows. God works in the same



way to prepare us for spiritual battle. He has given us a plan to execute in Scripture which will guarantee success if we follow it and surrender to the leadership of His Spirit. When seeking the Lord to develop such a plan, we can ask four questions: 1) Where am I most vulnerable to fail and engage in sin?, 2) How can I avoid putting myself in tempting situations altogether?, 3) What Scriptures can I memorize, so that I can quote them when temptation does arise?, and 4) On what other believer(s) can I call for accountability when I feel tempted? When we ask these questions before facing temptation and allow God to help us develop a pro-active plan, He will be faithful to strengthen us and to give us victory!

Why is it important to have a plan for facing tempting situations in which we are most vulnerable?

Question
4

Third, we must know our limits as individuals and remember that God has placed us in a community to fight against **wickedness** together. One person cannot be an army that can fight effectively against an enemy, but each person must do his own job to fulfill his particular position and work as a team. Because God created us to live in a community, what we say and do not only affects us, but it also reflects upon the Lord since we call ourselves His children. Therefore, we ought to encourage each other to imitate Christ, offer godly wisdom and support when we see others struggle, and correct one another when we err based upon the scriptural pattern established by Jesus ([Matt 18:15-20](#)). In this military context, the word translated **to stand** pictures a group of soldiers standing shoulder-to-shoulder in a line so that the enemy cannot advance. When we **stand** cohesively in a group as believers, we are less likely to be tricked by the deceitfulness (i.e. **wiles**) of the enemy.

In Reference



The word translated **wiles** literally means craftiness, trickery, or deceitfulness. It reminds us of the initial description of the serpent who deceived Eve—“the serpent was more cunning” ([Gen 3:1](#)).

Paul one again reminds us to **put on the whole armor of God** so that as a community **we may be able to withstand the evil day** (v. 13). This repetition reinforces the idea of how important it is to be prepared for battle against culture. Culture bombards us daily with its sinful practices and influences. Moreover, it attempts to desensitize us to what is right and holy in order to obscure its own sinful practices. Therefore, it's of the utmost importance that we have a community that fights against this corruption together and doesn't allow it to penetrate the hearts and minds of individuals in the church. When the community abides by Scripture and applies its principles, we can measure ourselves against God's standards and hold one another accountable. In a world in which everyone does what is right in his own eyes and lives by his own moral compass, we desperately need to surround ourselves with godly influences who will keep us focused on Christ and encourage us to overcome areas in which we struggle. Let us be a community that confronts sin rather than condones and accepts it; let us be a community that seeks to rely upon God fully for strength and wisdom so that we aren't deceived by the enemy and drawn off course. Let us be a church that stands for truth and holiness as God's people and members of His household!



In what ways does the culture attempt to desensitize us to sin and unrighteousness? How can we as a community (church) guard against cultural influences?

Question
5

Ephesians 6:14-17

BE EQUIPPED FOR VICTORY:

Having spoken in general terms about **the full armor of God**, Paul now describes some of the individual pieces, so that we might be well-equipped for victory. Although we could spend several weeks with an in-depth study on these individual pieces of **armor**, for the sake of this study we'll present a brief overview of each. First, we must secure (i.e. **having girded**) our lives with the belt of **truth** around our **waist** which depicts

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having an in-depth knowledge of God’s Word through which we exhibit integrity by applying it in our lives and living by His holy standards. In the first-century, the soldier’s belt secured his tunic above his knees, so that he could move freely without stumbling and have unrestricted access to his weapon to ward off the enemy’s attack. Spiritually, God’s Word communicates the gospel which sets us free from the bondage of sin through Christ and it gives us the principles by which we should live which ultimately mitigates worry so that we can please the Lord through our worship. In fact, Jesus underscores the importance of Scripture when He taught His followers saying, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32).

In spiritual warfare, we must know and apply Scripture in two primary ways, so that we will not be hindered in our “walk” with Christ. First, Scripture protects us from accepting false teaching, which is a hallmark of the devil’s deception ([Eph 6:11](#)), and following the mere opinion of man. Not only did Ephesus face a threat from heresy and false teaching in the first century ([1 Tim 1:3-7; 18-20; 4:1-3](#)), but it has become an even more prominent danger today with the rise of relativism and everyone judging



morality according to his own standards. Second, the belt of **truth** enables us to **stand firm** against temptation—remember how Jesus used Scripture in the wilderness to counter **the devil** ([Matt 4:1-11](#)). Moreover, it keeps us from getting ensnared by the traps of **the devil** if we study it daily, commit it to memory, and apply it in our lives. Hebrews 12:1 pictures

this well for this context: “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”

In what ways does the truth in Scripture help us defend against both error and temptation?

Question
6

Second, we should wear **the breastplate of righteousness** which conforms us to the image of Christ and allows us to walk according to His holiness. For the Roman soldier, **the breastplate** protected the vital organs like the heart and lungs, functioning in much the same way that modern body armor and bulletproof vests do. Spiritually, the heart represents our complete being—that is who we are: our thoughts, attitudes, perceptions, and perspectives. When Christ transforms us through His blood, He cleanses our hearts and creates us as a new person ([Psalm 51:10; 2 Cor 5:17](#)). On our own, however, we have no **righteousness** ([Rom 3:10](#)), but Christ instills His own **righteousness** into our lives ([Rom 10:4; 2 Cor 5:21](#)), so that we might be reconciled unto God. Because Christ has given us His **righteousness**, we must imitate Him and live daily in holiness as He does.

Therefore, we must do what is right in any situation and at any time; we must live with integrity. When we walk in righteousness and our hearts are pure, we will respond to situations the way in which Jesus does. We will also have the same perspective He does: we will love God and love others. Being righteous, however, isn't just a checklist of things that we must do. Certainly, God has outlined what we should and shouldn't do in His Word; yet, **righteousness** is more about a state of being—that is who we have become in Christ. Therefore, it's not just about *what* we do, but about *Who* we represent!

In what ways should we reflect the righteousness of Christ in our lives?

Question
7

Third, we should don the proper footwear by putting on **the preparation of the gospel of peace** to protect our **feet** (v. 15). The Romans wore special sandals made from thick pieces of leather which were laced from the ankle and tied above the knee. In battle, they would add metal spikes—similar to cleats—to give extra traction. These shoes, therefore, would support the ankle and prevent cuts on the soles, allowing the Romans to march further and longer without becoming tired and with the added spikes they would have an extra advantage in combat. Spiritually, we must have our **feet** firmly planted in **the gospel**, so that we won't waver from the **truth** and can **stand firm** against the enemy. Most people tend to think that this piece of **armor** refers to sharing **the gospel** with the lost, but in this context it actually means that we shouldn't compromise our biblical values and pattern ourselves after the world. We should indeed share **the gospel** every day as God leads, but even more importantly we must

Instruct

utilize it to know truth and evaluate our actions and thoughts.

In addition, we should treasure or value **the gospel**; when we value something, we keep it in a place of honor and prestige. We need to value Scripture by internalizing it in our hearts—not just to know the contents like a good story, but to apply and practice it daily in our lives. Many Christians, however, compromise their faith because they don't truly know God's Word. They don't spend time reading and meditating on it; neither do they "hide it in their heart" and apply it. **The gospel of peace** not only reconciles us with the Lord, but it also keeps us in right standing with Him when we abide by its principles ([John 14:15](#)). **Peace**, therefore, doesn't mean the absence of physical conflict or trials, but rather that through the blood of Christ we can receive forgiveness for our sins and be restored into right relationship with the Father ([Rom 5:1-2](#)). To abide by God's principles, we must know them and keep them in our hearts so that we might not sin against Him ([Psalm 119:11](#)).

In what ways has the church compromised its values and patterned itself after the world?
How can we keep from compromise by standing on the gospel of peace?

Question
8

Next, we should take **the shield of faith**, so that we might **be able to** extinguish **the fiery darts of the wicked one** (v. 16). The Roman **shield** was body-length, stretching from the feet to head and was so bulky and heavy that it required another person to carry it and march before the soldier. Because of its size, the shields were constructed from wood at which the enemy shot **fiery** arrows to cause it to catch ablaze and leave the soldier defenseless. Spiritually, the **shield** indicates that we have put our complete **faith** and trust in Christ; we should not allow fear to control our lives. **Faith** enables us to stand on God's promises because we fully know that He will fulfill them and He will provide. From the beginning, God has always fulfilled His promises—including offering salvation from our sins through the Messiah. Therefore, we must trust in the Lord alone—not our own abilities, other people or institutions, or any other method. We must turn to Christ first and trust that He will help us to grow in Him and withstand the onslaught of the enemy.

We should wear **the helmet of salvation** which helps to guard our minds by reminding us that we have responsibilities in Christ because of the **salvation** we have through Him (v. 17). First-century helmets were typically made of bronze and had ear flaps

that hung down in order to protect the head from any blow that the enemy may attempt. Spiritually, we must guard our minds and protect them from the degradation of society. When we surround ourselves with cultural influences rather than godly ones, we will most likely develop ungodly behaviors and habits. From our minds springs all our actions. Through it, we can perceive hate against our brother, harbor bitterness and unforgiveness, daydream about lustful desires of the flesh, speak negatively, plot revenge, and participate in all kinds of evil. At the same time, however, it's through our minds that we can discern and understand the will of the Lord for our lives.



Therefore, let us guard our minds against ungodly, sinful thoughts, and focus on those which are righteous and holy ([Phil 4:8-9](#)).

Why is it so important to guard our minds?

Question
9

Finally, we should take with us **the sword of the Spirit which** Paul explains **is the Word of God**. This is the only offensive piece of armor that Paul discusses in this section; the rest of the pieces provide defense against the enemy so that we might not let him advance against the community as a whole. Very briefly, **the sword of the Spirit**, or Scripture, enables us to accomplish three things. First, it demonstrates God's character to us. Second, it details God's plan for our lives—including salvation. Third, it establishes clear boundaries and expectations by which we should live. Above all, **the sword of the Spirit** makes the full **armor of God** effective because it shows how we ought to use each piece to defend against the enemy and it allows us to have ammunition to deal with the accusation and deception of the accuser when he comes. Therefore, let us **stand** together as a community to fight **the wicked one** of this world and obediently trust in the Holy One who came to save us.

Just as tragedy can strike in an instant without warning, so can the individual spiritual battles that may bombard us in this world. Yet, Paul has given us advanced warning that we will indeed face on-going spiritual battles which supersede any physical battle that we may ever encounter. With this warning, we must be prepared when these battles do come—and they will! Job, for example, had no advance warning that one day the adversary would be allowed to attack him tremendously and take almost everything away from him except his life. One after another his servants came to tell about the destruction of his family, his possessions, and his business. However, Job was prepared and always spoke what was right of the Lord. Even when his wife came and bid him to curse God and die, Job refused because he knew his Redeemer lives! If the enemy attacked you as harshly and thoroughly as Job, are you prepared to do what is right? As believers, we have a Redeemer to whom we can turn. We can trust Him for strength and protection when we call upon Him—not only as individuals, but also as a community. As a community, we are stronger when we walk in the way of the Lord together. God has placed us in this local family of believers so that we can be strengthened in our own nuclear families and fend off the attack of the devil together. Culture and secular society will tear apart families and cause dysfunction, but Christ redeems and restores. Let us trust in Christ as a community, walk together to support each other, and be prepared to fight the enemy without compromise so that we will always glorify the Lord in everything.

Incorporate

How has the Lord strengthened us as a local body of believers to resist temptation and magnify His name? What human and other resources has He given to assist in this strengthening?

How can we collectively be prepared to fight the evil one in this world as a community?

Why is it essential that we put on the full armor of God and not just a piece or two?

May 26, 2019



Remaining Vigilant in the Community

Ephesians 6:18-24

Focal Verse:

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.”

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Ephesians 6:18

Introduce

Going through his usual routine, Red Dee went to his mailbox to collect what typically turned out to be junk mail and bills. As he began to sort through it, Red noticed a hand-written envelope with the name of the greatest baseball player to have ever played the game. Thinking it really couldn't be him, he tore it open and began reading the letter. To his surprise, the letter stated how this player had heard how he had gone through some difficult times recently, so he wanted to drop by his home personally to encourage him. Nothing had ever happened to Red like this; he was ecstatic and bursting with joy! As he continued to read, the letter gave all the details about the day and time this sports legend would visit and Red Dee knew that he must be ready to receive him.

With great expectation, Red began diligently to prepare to receive his guest. He took his best suit to the cleaners to have it steamed and pressed. He worked tirelessly on his lawn, so that it would impress the star as soon as he stepped out of his car. Then, he detailed the inside of his home to make it spotless. On the day of the arrival, Red ran about frantically trying to finish last-minute projects to make sure everything was perfect. About an hour before the big event, he knew he was definitely ready, so he put on his suit and sat down in his favorite recliner. A few hours later, Red awoke to find the sun beginning to sink on the horizon. After he ran to the door and opened it to check on his guest, a notecard dropped. It read: "Sorry I missed you. All the best." Red Dee was devastated!

Despite his great expectation and anticipation for the meeting, Red had missed it! He thought he was indeed prepared, but it turned out that he wasn't vigilant and watchful enough to receive his guest. In Ephesians 6:18, Paul encourages us to pray "always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, *being watchful* to this end *with all perseverance* and supplication for all the saints." Last week, we saw how Paul advised the Ephesians to be prepared for spiritual warfare against the craftiness of the devil. As a result, we



Introduce

must constantly be on guard! We need to pray for ourselves and others to remain vigilant and persevere, remaining faithful to continue the ministry to which Christ has called us. Specifically, we should pray that we proclaim the gospel boldly and participate in the lives of believers to minister the comfort, grace, and love of the Lord. Therefore, let us remain vigilant as a community to look for opportunities to speak the gospel and serve in the name of the Lord. Let's not be like Red and doze off only to find a note proclaiming: "Sorry you missed an opportunity to serve me. God."

Key
Question

Why is it important to remain vigilant both in terms of spiritual warfare as well as in our service to the Lord?

Ephesians 6:18

PRAY WITH VIGILANCE ALWAYS:

As Paul concludes his letter, he reminds the Ephesians to pray continually and to **be watchful with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints** (v. 18). This flows naturally from the command to “put on the whole armor of God” which we studied last week. In order to prepare effectively for spiritual battle, we must seek the Lord in **prayer** and remain vigilant to “stand firm” against the attack of the enemy. If we become complacent and lackadaisical, the attack of the enemy can lead to compromise and moral failure. For this reason, Jesus warns “the church in Sardis” in Revelation to “be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God” (Rev 3:2). This warning had special significance for Sardis because twice in their history the city had fallen even though the citizens fancied themselves invincible.



Located in Western Asia Minor (modern Turkey) northeast of Ephesus, the city sat on top of a steep plateau with only one way up and down known only to its residents. Militarily, the city had a tremendous advantage over its attackers with its elevated position. Because of its seemingly impenetrable position and the wealth of its citizens, the people became confident to the point of arrogance and they failed to remain vigilant. Twice in its illustrious history, the city fell without a fight because no guards were posted and the enemy climbed the cliffs, gaining access to the city. On the first occasion, Sardis actually had no walls to defend herself during the siege of Cyrus the Great who simply ascended to the city and took it without a fight.

On the second occasion, the Romans surrounded the city and waited for the opportunity to strike. Additional defenses, such as a city wall and guard towers, had been added, but the people had become so overconfident that they posted no guards during the night, leaving the city vulnerable. While surrounding the city, the Romans observed a soldier who lost his helmet down the side of the mountain. Watching as he

Instruct

retrieved it, the Roman army discovered how to access the city, so later that evening they ascended to the top of the mountain and found everyone sleeping—once again the city was taken without a skirmish. In the spiritual battles that we face daily, we cannot afford to lose focus and let our guard down because it will have devastating consequences. Instead, we must focus on Christ and stand firm in His Word, so that we can live righteously as His ambassadors and successfully stop the advance of the enemy into the community (church).

What are the consequences if we don't remain vigilant as a community? In what ways do we need to remind each other to be vigilant?

Question
1

Prayer helps us to stay vigilant; therefore, Paul emphasizes the need to pray **always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit**. In Greek, Paul literally states: “through every prayer and supplication praying at all times in the Spirit.” To pray **in the Spirit** means that we should allow Him to guide us. Paul states elsewhere, “Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Rom 8:27). In other words, **the Spirit** reveals God’s will to us and guides our prayers accordingly when we submit to Him. Moreover, we should allow **the Spirit** to direct our prayers “at all times” (i.e. **always**). In English, it looks as if Paul urges us to pray **always**—which we should ([1 Thess 5:17](#)). However, the emphasis here really lies on *how* we should pray—**in the Spirit**. If we are honest, we probably get into a routine when we pray and we have the standard requests that we ask, but we don’t really spend much time allowing **the Spirit** to lead, listening to what He says in reply, or contemplating the will of the Lord for our lives. This is what Paul warns against in this passage! Let’s slow down in our prayers, spend time seeking God, and take time listening to His response as He leads us through **the Spirit**.

In-Depth Information

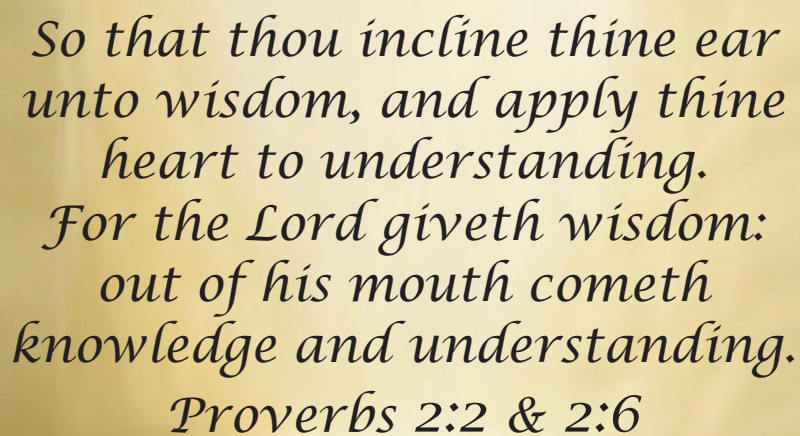


The phrase “**every prayer and supplication**” doesn’t refer to two types of prayer, but Paul is underscoring the need to bring our requests to the Lord by using synonyms that overlap in their meaning. In this context, it’s not individual requests, but requests for the community as a whole—**for all the saints**.

Because of this spiritual battle, in what ways do we need to pray for each other as a community of believers? First, we need to pray for unity in the community which is truly the overarching theme of the entire letter to the Ephesians. Both Jew and Gentile have been united in one body ([Eph 2:11-22](#)) for the express purpose of participating in ministry to proclaim the gospel ([Eph 3:1-7](#)), maturing together in the Lord ([Eph 4:11-16](#)), and living transformed lives that reflect Christ ([Eph 4:17-5:16](#)). If we don't remain vigilant as a community, the enemy will cause divisions and schisms in the church—just look at the church in Corinth which followed the personalities of individuals rather than seeking and serving the Savior ([1 Cor 1:10-17](#)). Therefore, we must be united behind one goal and one purpose in which we honor Christ through our obedience, worship, and service. Imagine the chaos that would occur on the battlefield if no one knew the objective and everyone acted upon his own whims. This kind of chaos would even make it difficult or even impossible to identify the enemy and keep them from advancing.

Consequently, we must also pray that we seek God's wisdom together as His people rather than acting upon human opinion or personal preference. It becomes difficult

to discern the truth when people base their beliefs on mere opinion and define morality according to their own preferences rather than standing united upon God's Word. When such divisions exist in the church, it allows the enemy to enter undetected because people will seek out teachers who tell them what they want to hear rather than the truth. In [2 Tim 4:1-4](#), Paul

An open book with a dark cover lies flat on a wooden surface. The pages are white with some yellowing at the edges. Overlaid on the image is a quote in a black, serif font. The quote is: "So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding. For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. Proverbs 2:2 & 2:6".

*So that thou incline thine ear
unto wisdom, and apply thine
heart to understanding.
For the Lord giveth wisdom:
out of his mouth cometh
knowledge and understanding.
Proverbs 2:2 & 2:6*

reminds Timothy of this very problem and implores him to "be watchful in all things" just as he does the Ephesians. In addition, Jesus also warns against such a cavalier and disjointed attitude when He interjects, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves" (Matt 7:15). As a community, we must pray daily that we would be united in Christ to uphold and practice the principles in Scripture, so that culture may not influence the church unimpeded.

In what ways or areas does the enemy try to create disunity in the church?

Question
2

Instruct

Second, we must pray that as a community we remain focused and don't become distracted by issues that arise in life. We live in a world fraught with distractions and interruptions. Ask yourself: How many times did I start to read this lesson and become distracted before I finished it? If you happened to get all the way through without being interrupted, daydreaming, or losing concentration, consider yourself blessed! Distractions can often be beyond our control, especially if we're married and have children. It can be difficult to find peace and quiet where we can concentrate. However, sometimes the distractions are created by us. We have short attention spans because of today's media—particularly the Internet which teaches us to mindlessly click pages until we see something that interests us. As a result, we want instantaneous information, but we don't want to read about it or even watch a lengthy video. Instead, we either skim through the article—sometimes missing the entire point—or find the shortest video clip. Yet, when we take shortcuts and don't focus, things can often go awry.

Spiritually, we have many things that can distract us and shift our focus from Christ to the culture. As a church, we unfortunately compete with sports, hobbies, work, social activities, and even secular education. A few years ago, for example, school and community sporting events or practices wouldn't have been held on Wednesdays or Sundays. For the sake of seeking scholarships for their children or even attempting to push them toward a professional career, some parents who profess to follow Christ have allowed their children to participate in these events at the expense of worship and Bible study in the church. In essence, they have placed sports above Christ! This should never happen! It teaches children the wrong thing and it elevates a temporary, earthly activity over the eternal importance of knowing Christ. We can certainly enjoy sports and other hobbies, but we cannot allow them to distract us from our true purpose: knowing Christ! As a community, we must pray that we remain focused so that Christ can change the secular world through us rather than the secular world changing us.

What other things in culture cause us to lose focus in the church?

Question
3

Third, we should pray for **perseverance**, so that as a community we would be proactive rather than complacent. Perhaps, complacency is the greatest threat the church faces today because we tend to settle for mediocrity rather than strive for excellency

in Christ. For this very reason, Jesus chastises the church in Laodicea: "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot" (Rev 3:15). Complacency leads to indifference. We see complacency and indifference manifested in the church in several ways today. A complacent church doesn't feel the urgency to share the gospel; the members may have security in their relationship with the Lord, but they don't extend that hope to others. A complacent church doesn't attempt to combat the culture by speaking the truth against sin and wickedness; instead, they try to maintain the status quo under the guise of not offending others. We shouldn't speak arrogantly, but as we shall see in the next section we should speak **boldly** with love. Finally, a complacent church maintains what they have instead of growing in the Lord and expanding the kingdom into the secular world; a complacent church doesn't grow spiritually through maturity nor does it grow numerically by seeing souls repent and accept Christ, being added to the kingdom.

How do we see complacency in the church today? What steps do we need to overcome complacency?

Question
4

On the contrary, we must persevere in the Lord until He calls us home by always faithfully doing the things which He has called us to do here on earth. Therefore, we must ask two questions: In what ways has God called us as a community to persevere and how should we pray **for all the saints** to preserve? Specifically, we can pray that the church perseveres in doing right and speaking the truth no matter what the culture may say or how the culture may try to prevent it. Throughout history, those who have obeyed the Lord and lived according to His righteous standards have been persecuted for doing what is right ([John 15:20](#)). Often, evil seems to win in this world, but we must remember that the victory has already been won in Christ and we have a greater inheritance that remains.

Moreover, we must preserve as a church in ministry and service of the Lord rather than giving up when the times get tough. When ministry becomes difficult and tiring, it becomes even more imperative that we trust



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the Lord and turn to Him for strength ([Eph 6:10](#)). It can become discouraging when we see little or no results in terms of people repenting and accepting Christ, but we can't stop sharing the gospel; we can't see it as a hopeless endeavor. We must persist! Similarly, we may see much immaturity and lack of spiritual growth in the community as a whole at times. We may have disagreements, encounter disappointment, and experience hurt while in the service of the Lord by other people with whom we serve. We can't let that affect our own pursuit of maturity and service. Our service doesn't wholly depend upon the progress of others, but in the Lord and the strength that He gives. Therefore, let us pray for one another to persevere in the Lord to be an effective community that reaches the world with the gospel.

In what other ways has God called the church to persevere?

Question
5

Finally, Paul urges us to offer **supplication for all the saints**; this means that we should pray on behalf of the needs of our brothers and sisters in the community. We often call this intercessory prayer. Certainly, we should pray for fellow believers for their physical needs: family, finances, and health, but it includes much more than these things of which we typically think. For instances, we should pray like Paul did in [Ephesians 3:14-21](#) that fellow believers might know the surpassing knowledge of the love of Christ. Pray for strength and wisdom when the enemy comes to assail them, but also pray for opportunities to encourage them when times get tough. Pray that they might resist temptation and remain holy, striving for maturity in the Lord. We should pray for the same things for other believers that we should be praying for ourselves. When we pray for the community, the Lord will be faithful to strengthen us and keep us on the right path, so He can use us for His glory!

Ephesians 6:19-20

PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL BOLDLY:

Next, Paul asks the Ephesians to pray for him specifically that he might have boldness in sharing **the gospel**. Literally, he wants them to pray that the Lord would give him the right word (i.e. **utterance**) to speak, so that he can **boldly make known the mystery of the gospel** (v. 19). Furthermore, Paul asks for boldness to proclaim **the gospel** despite his circumstance of being imprisoned (i.e. **in chains**). Even though he is under

house arrest in Rome, he still understands that he's God's **ambassador** who **ought to speak boldly** without fear of consequences (v. 20). Throughout Paul's ministry, we can see evidence of God answering the prayers of believers for boldness on his behalf to proclaim the gospel despite the perilous circumstances he faced continually. Whether facing imprisonment, beatings, stonings, or shipwrecks, Paul still spoke **boldly** because the Holy Spirit equipped and empowered him and believers prayed for him.

In-Depth Information



*Paul has already explicitly told us what **the mystery of the gospel** entails earlier in this letter. The mystery reveals that salvation has come to both Jew and Gentile alike through faith in Christ Jesus. Consequently, they have been united in one body through Christ as joint-heirs for the purpose of maturing, worshiping, and serving together. See [Eph 1:9; 3:3-4; 3:9; and 5:32](#)*

Just like Paul requests the Ephesians to pray for him, we ought to pray on behalf of one another that we too would proclaim **the gospel boldly** as we **ought to speak** and overcome any obstacles that the enemy may put in our path. In addition, we should pray that God grants us wisdom in knowing how to share the gospel both accurately and clearly. For this reason, we should ask Him to guide our words (i.e. **utterance**) so that we know exactly when, how, and what we should say in any situation that we present **the gospel**. We don't want to hinder anyone from coming to Christ because we have relied on our own power, logic, and methods rather than following the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Even though we may think that we have the best illustrations and the most-effective presentation, sharing **the gospel** still requires the presence of the Holy Spirit! Only the Holy Spirit can convict people and transform them through the blood of Christ shed on the cross. In the same way the Holy Spirit convicts those who hear **the gospel**, He helps us to listen to their life stories and questions and to respond with the appropriate Scripture. The leadership of the Spirit, therefore, is essential to the entire process from speaking, hearing, and finally receiving **the gospel**. We too need to be bolder in sharing **the gospel** daily with family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and acquaintances. We need to make the truth of Scripture known—not with words from mankind, but words from the Lord which He has given us in the Bible! We cannot take for granted that we live in an area with a high concentration of churches and that people have heard **the** undiluted **gospel** straight from Scripture. We need the boldness of Christ who will give us the words to **speak** so that we can

Instruct

share without hindrance. Secularism along with other religions have converts all over the world because they have ways of getting their messages out to the people. As Christians, we have been commanded to take the message of **the gospel** into all the world, but in many ways we have become lax. We need to be reminded of the urgency and the importance of sharing **the gospel** because it's a life or death message; only **the gospel** offers hope; only through **the gospel** can lives be changed. Let's be reinvigorated to share **the gospel** faithfully and boldly with people from all nations and people of all ages and generations because every person needs to find hope and salvation in the Lord.

How often do you share the gospel? Why don't you share the gospel more than you do? Why is it important to keep sharing the gospel even if people sometimes don't listen or it seems like no one responds?

Question
6

Ephesians 6:21-24

PARTICIPATE IN THE LIVES OF OTHER BELIEVERS:

In the last few verses of this letter, Paul provides some personal information about how he and the others with him are doing. In fact, Paul is sending **Tychicus**, who is a **brother** in Christ and **faithful minister**, so that they **may know** his **affairs** and **how he's doing** (v. 21). In addition to the letter, **Tychicus** will explain more in detail about their **affairs** and **comfort** their **hearts** by encouraging them about the work being done in the Lord (v. 22). We may often gloss over this section of the letter because it may not relate to us personally or have theological significance. On the contrary, it contains Paul's **purpose** for his letter and for sending **Tychicus** to them—and it has significance for us! We need to have an open and honest relationship with other believers so they can pray for us, encourage us, and we can work together as one body to do extraordinary things for the Lord and His kingdom. To do this, we need to know each other intimately—not just on Sunday mornings when we exchange pleasantries, but as believers who strive together to mature in Christ and be conformed to His image. This doesn't mean that we have to share every intimate or personal detail in public or air our dirty laundry. However, it means that we should participate in each other's lives in such a way that we know one another's idiosyncrasies, personalities, personal

preferences, abilities, spiritual giftedness, and strengths and weaknesses. It takes time and effort to build such relationships whereby we can pray specifically for each other and work together cohesively as a body that honors Christ. In addition, it will require good communication, but also patience and forgiveness at times when our human natures arise. To participate in each other's lives, it means that we will rejoice together, mourn together, struggle and succeed together in ministry, help each other when we have needs, and grow together by pointing to Christ and reminding one another what He has said in His Word. When we participate in one another's lives as Paul did with the Ephesians, we will build a stronger community that relies upon the Lord and seeks to live worthy of our calling.

In what other ways has God called us to participate in the lives of other believers?

Question
7

Paul ends this letter in the same way which he began by wishing them **peace** and **grace** (see [Eph 1:1-2](#)), but to it he adds **love with faith** (vv. 23-24). Through Christ, **the Father** has given us **peace** and reconciled us with Him—as we learned throughout this letter. He didn't have to offer us this reconciliation, but out of His abundant **grace** He demonstrated His **love** for us; therefore, when we put our **faith** and trust in Him alone and repent of our sins, we can have a relationship with Him and receive that inheritance of which Paul speaks in [Eph 1:3-14](#). Above all, God's **grace** and mercy extend from His **love** for us; He loved us so much that He sent His Son to die for us willingly and obediently. Therefore, He provides a model for which we ought to live as a community. Just as God is **love**, so also ought we to **love** one other in the community. The **love** of God and the **love** of others forms the basis for our community. Therefore, as a community of believers, let us exude **love** while we expectantly await His return and seek to serve Him in the way He has equipped and called us. Above all, let us pray for one another that we will remain vigilant and not become distracted from our purpose, that we will proclaim the gospel boldly, and that we will participate in the lives of other believers in the same way that Christ has so loved us.

This month brings a conclusion to our studies in Ephesians. Although we could have written, studied, and said much more about this letter, it's my prayer that you will continue to study and one day that we will return to this letter as a church more mature and enlightened by the riches of God's Word as His people. For the next several months, we will focus our study on the book of Hosea which God uses as a beautiful description of His relationship with Israel (and by extension the church). Although Hosea deeply loved wife and remained faithful to her always, she was constantly unfaithful to him—much like Israel was/is with the Lord. As a community, we need to have a healthy relationship with the Lord and learn how to remain faithful to Him in a world that so desperately seeks to distract us and draw us away from Him.

Really, this was Paul's cry throughout the letter to the Ephesians that they might constantly seek the Lord in prayer and not become distracted by the secular culture around them. Instead, he urged them constantly to remain vigilant and focused on Christ, so that when trials and tough times came that they would overcome victoriously in Him. We live in a culture that offers so many distractions today. We have a number of things, many of which can be good, that vie for our time, resources, and attention, but we cannot allow them to overshadow our relationship with Christ. We must "be watchful" and ready at all times to do what is right, to live as His ambassador, and to share the gospel. Let us be a community that seeks God and makes Him the priority in our lives so that we can serve Him by loving others and function in the roles in which He has intended from the very foundation of creation.

Incorporate

In what ways can we as individuals and corporately as a church pray for the saints (i.e. other believers)?

In what ways can we as individuals and corporately as a church be bolder in our proclamation of the gospel in the world?

In what ways as a church can we effectively participate in the lives of other believers?

Journal: Document God's Work

MAY 2019

WRITTEN AND PUBLISHED BY
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF FORT
WORTH

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