

## Ephesians 5 - New International Version (NIV) translation to English

**5** Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children <sup>2</sup> and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

<sup>3</sup> But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. <sup>4</sup> Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. <sup>5</sup> For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. <sup>[a]</sup> <sup>6</sup> Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. <sup>7</sup> Therefore do not be partners with them.

<sup>8</sup> For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light <sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) <sup>10</sup> and find out what pleases the Lord. <sup>11</sup> Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. <sup>12</sup> It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. <sup>13</sup> But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. <sup>14</sup> This is why it is said:

“Wake up, sleeper,

rise from the dead,

and Christ will shine on you.”

<sup>15</sup> Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. <sup>18</sup> Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, <sup>19</sup> speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, <sup>20</sup> always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>21</sup> Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

22 Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing [b] her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— 30 for we are members of his body. 31 “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” [c] 32 This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

#### Footnotes:

- a. **Ephesians 5:5** *Or kingdom of the Messiah and God*
- b. **Ephesians 5:26** *Or having cleansed*
- c. **Ephesians 5:31** **Gen. 2:24**

#### POINTS OF INTEREST:

- “Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love…”
  - Chapter 4 ended with a number of suggestions about how the Ephesians can “live well” when they are feeling empowered by Christ. Remember, this was originally one continuous letter (the chapters and verses were added by editors hundreds of years later), so where chapter 5 begins, there doesn’t seem to be a break in thought. Paul continues on with ways the Ephesians can “live well” when they are “putting on their New Selves” (the phrase from chapter 4… see [Chapter 4 points of interest](#))
- “Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them.”
  - As I remember Paul’s worry from Chapter 4 that the Ephesians are in danger of “being blown here or there by every wind of teaching”, this paragraph of verses 3-7 has some harsh words for what sounds like “people trying to deceive others that they have some good teaching to offer”. The whole paragraph reminds me of advice Jesus gave to “judge a tree by its fruit - a good tree can’t bear bad fruit, and a bad tree can’t bear good fruit.” it seems like Paul is saying here: people who behind closed doors are greedy, sexually abusive or aggressive, foul to others, and ungrateful aren’t good trees… and therefore, aren’t going to bear good fruit for your community’s mission to build unity in Christ. So don’t follow them or partner with them.
- “Live as children of light”
  - Using the imagery of light and darkness, Paul is saying: if people in your community are living transparently, being honest and open, then you can avoid “bad tree” deceivers.

- “... because the days are evil”
  - One of those intense sentences, where modern readers like us are probably thinking “whoa there... cool out Paul.” It’s possible that Paul and his culture just had a bit more flair for the dramatic than we do today in the 21st century Western world (we value being careful with our words and politically correct... and of course that’s the case in the world of Google and YouTube where anyone’s words can so easily and quickly be taken out of context and amplified). Paul, when he was writing this letter to a specific group of people, I doubt had any fear of his words being taken out of context by people who the letter wasn’t intended for (let alone by people nearly two thousand years later). The other possibility suggested by scholars and historians when it comes to this intense line from Paul refers to the fact that people in that day just tended to believe that the end of the world (when God would make all things right and end evil) could come any time. In this case he might be calling the days evil because there is a future good coming any day now.
- “Submit to one another out of reference for Christ”
  - This last section of chapter 5 is one of the most misinterpreted in the whole Bible. The misinterpretation is that it condones a patriarchal worldview in which men are superior to women, and sadly that worldview was advanced in Jesus’ name for many hundreds of years. Only recently has this misinterpretation been corrected. There’s a couple reasons for the misinterpretation:
    - First, this section of writing from Paul was a common genre of writing in his culture called a “household code”. It’s a kind of writing we don’t have today. And as a result we read it incorrectly. Think, for example, of the traffic reports every morning on the radio (“outbound on the Edens is 25, 30 inbound; the Ike is backed up to Wolf, in to the circle we are at 40... the Kennedy is all clear at this time”). If you didn’t know what a 21st-century traffic report was, you would be like: “what the heck?” Likewise, a first century household code about men, women, children, and slaves makes us say “what the heck?” The fact is: these sorts of codes were written and released by authorities in that day, and always reinforced the status quo: men dominant, women subservient, children obedient, slaves brutally treated. By comparison, Paul was actually presenting something VERY different.
    - Second, hundreds of years after this letter was written, editors inserted a heading called something like “Christian Household Relationships” in between verse 21 and verse 22. Go back up to the passage above and pretend there is a break in text and a heading in between those two verses. When you do that, it looks like Paul’s final section of thought here begins with “women are lesser, men are greater”. But now go back and read it as it was written without any break in text. Clearly, the section is supposed to begin with an idea of “mutual submission - all people submitting to one another”, and then he goes on to discuss how, in his view, that looks for each member of the sort of households in the Ephesian community. THIS was the most progressive thing anyone in that day was saying. Far from Paul being patriarchal; on the terms of his culture, he was pretty much a flaming-feminist!