

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

EPHESIANS 5-6

In the Bible, "the way we walk" means more than how we move our feet. It refers to how we live our lives! It's more about our lifestyle than it is our gait.

Beginning in Chapter 4, Paul tells us how to move through life as believers in Jesus. And in chapter 5, the theme continues... walk in love, walk in the light, walk in wisdom, and walk in submission to one another..

Chapter 5 begins, "Therefore be imitators of God as dear children." Kids are prone to mimic their heroes.

When I was a child, my hero was my dad. I'd sit in the bathroom and watch dad brush his teeth. Dad wore dentures, so he'd pull out his plate and scrub them with his toothbrush. Mom says she'd walk in on me, and I'd be brushing my imaginary dentures - *mimicking dad...*

God wants us to mimic Him - we should walk as Jesus walked. *And here's how, verse 2, "walk in love..."*

My psychology book in college defined the word "love" as "an agitated state of psychological arousal."

Is that real love? Imagine, gazing into your honey's eyes, and whispering, "Baby, you agitate my psyche!"

I believe love is more than a burning brain wave. It's more than a feeling or emotion. For the true definition of love, you have to look to its author. On the cross, Jesus showed us the true meaning of love!

Paul states in verse 2, “And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling aroma.”

According to Jesus’ example, genuine love consists of giving, offering, and sacrificing - it’s a commitment.

Amy Carmichael wrote, “You can give without loving, but you can never love without giving.” Jesus gave up His rights, His security, His comfort. He sacrificed it all to save us. Sacrifice is now the plumb-line of real love.

Verse 3, “But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints...” Notice, Paul clumps three evils together... “*fornication, uncleanness, covetousness.*” Love is all about *giving* - while **lust** is all about *getting*.

Two stray dogs in an alley like each other enough to have sex - *but that's not love*. True love willingly waits!

It never *dishonors or defiles* the person it loves.

Love *lays down what I want and lives for God's best!* A Christian will preserve the purity of their future spouse. And Christians are called to love one another.

It reminds me of the two lovers. The woman asked the man, “*Do you love me?*” The man replied, “*Yes, dear.*” She asked again, “*Would you die for me?*” To which he replied, “*Sorry, mine is an undying devotion.*”

And here’s the moral of the story... love that won’t die to self-centeredness and selfishness is not real love.

Paul continues describing what love avoids, “**neither**

filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.”

You can tell a lot about a person by what makes them laugh. Neither *crude humor*, or *borderline banter*, or *sexual innuendo* should come from a Christian. Our vocal cords should vibrate with thanksgiving to God.

Verse 5, “For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.”

Here are three folks who won't go to heaven... *none of them are capable of restraint*. A fornicator's downfall is lust, the unclean's is independence, the and covetous' is greed. All three people are out of control.

Life is about their *libido*, their *will*, and their *wallet*. They lack morals. But it's not just a moral problem, it's also spiritual. Notice, this person is called “*an idolater*.”

Most of today's Americans would never bow before a statue - but they worship sex, and independence, and money. When you value something supremely - and pursue it at all costs - it's the equivalent of an idol.

It reminds me of the young businessman who flipped his car over the guardrail and went down a steep embankment. The twisted metal severed off his arm.

When the hero units finally reached him, the guy just kept whining, “*Oh, my BMW. Oh, my BMW.*”

The paramedics were appalled that this guy was so materialistic all he could think about was his car.

One of the EMTs scolded him, “*Buddy, you've got more to*

worry about than a car. Your arm was chopped off." The man suddenly gets this panicked look on his face and starts crying, *"Oh, my Rolex. Oh, my Rolex."*

Verse 6, **"Let no one deceive you with empty words (or false assurances), for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience."**

God is no fool. You can say you worship God but in reality worship sex, or self, or stuff. It's not what you say that matters to God, it's the pursuit of your heart.

Verse 7 warns those of us who are Christians not to follow idols. **"Therefore do not be partakers with them."**

"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord." Notice, according to Paul we didn't just walk in darkness, we were darkness. And now that we're in Christ we don't just walk in light, we are light!

Changes occur deep inside a Christian. We don't just change environments - we become a new person.

The light of God now shines *from* us. **A Christian is a spiritual fire-fly. He or she lights up the dark world.**

Paul encourages us to **"walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord."**

Note the three components - the three divine rays that make up the light of God within us - *goodness to others, right-ness before God, and truth in all things!*

Verse 11, **"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works**

of darkness, but rather expose them.”

In the winter, northern cities use salt to clear the roads of ice and snow. Thus, a mixture of exhaust, and salt, and snow gets plastered onto the sides of the cars. All the cars end up looking a murky-gray.

But on the first nearly spring day some fellow will wash his car and restore it to its original color. When everyone else on the block sees the one clean car, they realize how dirty their cars have become.

And as Christians, we are called to be the one clean car! Without condemning anyone or being judgmental, we expose the darkness by shining God's light.

“For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.” Some sins are so shameful they shouldn't even be mentioned. Nothing is gained by talking about them. It's best left in silence.

We drive out the darkness not by studying it, or discussing it, or fighting it - but by shining the light!

“But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.” What the world needs is for us to walk in God's light.

“Therefore He says (he being Isaiah): “Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.” We need to be wide awake to God's concerns.

A battle rages around us. It's obvious that the world is asleep in the dark, but what's more tragic is that the Church is asleep in the light. We need to wake up!

“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise...” *“Circumspectly”* means *“to walk gingerly, to be careful where you plant your feet.”* I learned to walk *“circumspectly”* when my kids were toddlers...

My boys played with Legos, and invariably not all of the legos would get picked up. Usually, the Legos were found in the middle of the night by me as I stumbled through the house. I’d step on a Lego and ouch, it hurt! I learned to walk *“circumspectly”* or *“carefully.”*

And this is how we should live in a dark world. Satan is notorious for throwing banana peels on the sidewalk. One false move can cause years of pain and agony.

Jim Bakker was a TV preacher in the 1970s before a sordid affair knocked him out of the limelight. I’ll never forget his comment afterward, *“It’s amazing how fifteen minutes can ruin your life.”* What a warning!

We need to *“walk circumspectly,”* and here’s how... First, *“redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”*

If you live to be 70 years old and throughout your life you work 5 days a week, 8 hours a day - sleep 8 hours a night - travel about 1 hour each day - spend 2 hours eating - and an hour daily on grooming and hygiene... *then here’s the discretionary time you have left...*

If you’re 20, you’ve got about 13 years left to invest in non-mandatory activities... If you’re 35, you’ve got just 9 years of life left... If you’re 45 you’ve got only 6.5 years to live as you please... If you’re 55 it’s down to 4 years... And if 65 years old you’ve got less than 16 months to spend your life as you see fit. *Time is running out!* If you want your life to count for

God's Kingdom you don't have a second to waste on sin!

Paul writes, "Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is." And here is His will, "do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit." Remember at the Feast of Pentecost the original disciples were filled with the Spirit, but onlookers accused them of being drunk.

There are ways that being filled with the Holy Spirit is like being drunk with wine. God's Spirit can suppress natural inhibitions, He impacts our thinking, He affects our disposition. *Ultimately, He influences our behavior.*

The difference is that alcohol causes "dissipation" or disorientation. It clouds my perspective and deadens my senses. While the Holy Spirit does the opposite. He brings clarity and heightens my awareness of God.

Distilled spirits will send me into a tailspin - whereas, the Holy Spirit will help me gain and maintain control.

And the Holy Spirit produces joy - a spiritual high.

When you're filled with the Spirit, you're prone to uninhibited worship... Verse 19, "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ..." If you've never done so, you need to ask God to fill you with His Spirit!

Verse 21, "submitting to one another in the fear of God." To walk worthy of our calling let's walk *in love, in light, in wisdom,*

and *in submission to one another*.

Now some of you know what's coming next. You've read verse 22, "*wives, submit to your husbands...*" The wives are cringing and the husbands are perking up.

But before Paul says a word about wives submitting to husbands, he tells us all to "*submit to one another.*"

When I'm filled with the Spirit, my needs are met, so I can focus on the needs of other people. That's why the key to marriage is to be filled with the Spirit! It's been said, "Two people can have a happy marriage, only after they get a divorce from themselves."

But once we take to heart verse 21, then verse 22 applies, "*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.*" I'm reminded of the man who asked the librarian to help him find the book titled, "*Man - Master of His Home.*" She pointed him to the "*fiction*" section.

Indeed, Paul's instructions for husbands and wives won't win any awards for political correctness.

Today, few marriages are ordered biblically. But take note... today, very few marriages last! *Before you toss out God's wisdom you should take a second look...*

First, realize what Paul is not saying. No wife should become a doormat for a selfish or abusive husband.

The Greek word translated "*submit*" is "*hupotasso.*" It means, "*to arrange under or to line up behind.*"

Biblical submission doesn't mean *a wife can't have a life*. But she's to arrange her life around her husband's. You could say the husband sketches out the lines of the picture, but

then the wife can color in those lines.

Both parties contribute equally to the painting, but they play different roles. *It's an ordered equality.*

If someone says, "you're running around like a chicken with its head cut off" - it's not a compliment.

All bodies need a head - not *two heads*, not *no head*, but *one head*. That's why God established a single head over the family. And it's the husband's role to supply that leadership, while a wife lends her support.

Billy Graham's wife, Ruth, once commented, "The best advice I can give to unmarried girls is to marry someone you don't mind adjusting to. God tailors the wife to fit the husband, not the husband to fit the wife."

"For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything."

Notice, roles in a marriage aren't assigned arbitrarily.

In marriage, God is painting a picture of realities that go far beyond your domestic concerns. The reason your marriage is such a big deal is that God has given it universal, eternal, mystical meaning that transcends you and your spouse. Marriage is a spiritual snapshot.

God has chosen to illustrate Christ's relationship with the Church through your relationship with your spouse. This is what makes a marriage sacred and special.

Kathy and I are co-stars in a heavenly production.

I'm the leading man and she's the leading lady, and together we are portraying to our friends and family the greatest love story ever told, the Gospel of Christ.

That's why its important we play our parts!

And in my opinion, the most difficult role in the drama belongs to the husband. Verse 25, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for her.” *That gentlemen is a tall order!*

A wife should love her husband enough to live for him, but a husband should love his wife enough to die for her. And not just once - in a gallant act - but in a million daily ways he should be willing to lay down his rights to protect, and nurture, and minister to his wife.

But there's more, “that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word...” Are we loving our wives in ways that refresh and purify her?

Are we pointing her to Jesus - His forgiveness and acceptance - *or do we regurgitate her faults and failures?* Do we treat her with grace, or grade her on performance? *Do I love my wife as Jesus loves me?*

For here is the Lord's goal for His Church... “that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.” Jesus desires a glorious church. Though we're wounded and wrinkled and have our age spots - He sees us with no spots.

He's committed to cleansing us and escorting us into His

glory. This is how a husband should treat his wife.

Verse 28, “So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.” As a man nourishes his body, a husband should help his wife grow as a person and as a Christian. Here’s a question for husbands, “*Since she married you, has your wife gotten prettier or plainer? Is she flourishing or floundering?*” In other words, “*What have you been doing to help her grow and glow?*”

It’s been said, “**Treat your wife like a thoroughbred, and she will never be a nag.**” A good husband enriches his wife; he doesn’t smother her or stifle her.

This is why I’m saying, the husband’s job is tougher. Ladies, all you have to do is submit to his leadership. Trust him to lead, and support him in the process. His job is to love you as Christ loves the church!

Verse 31 quotes Genesis 2, God’s original plan and purpose for marriage, “**For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.**” This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”

You leave - there’s a separation from your parents.
You cleave - there’s a dedication to your spouse.
And you weave two lives together - there’s a growing unification that requires a lifetime to accomplish.

Verse 33 reiterates what both men and women need most, “Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.” **Women need love and men need respect.** This is why husbands should love their wives, and wives should respect their husbands.

And it has a snowball effect... **When a husband loves his wife, she respects him - which prompts more love for her, which then solicits more respect for him.**

But the snowball can roll in reverse... If a **husband feels disrespected, he won't love his wife, which will fuel more disrespect in her... and the beat goes on.**

Husbands need to love, and wives need to respect.

And what about parents and kids? Chapter 6, “**Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.**” But note the qualification, *“in the Lord.”*

God would never expect a wife or a child to submit to an ungodly or immoral demand - that's a violation of God's will. It's said, **“Godly submission never requires what God forbids or forbids what God requires.”**

But when a good parent desires God's best for their child, then the child needs to obey his or her parents.

Verse 2, “**Honor your father and mother,**” which is the first commandment with promise: “**that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.**” You'll live longer and better if you listen to your parent's wisdom.

“**And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but**

bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” The Greek word translated “*training*” means “discipline.” “*Admonition*” is “encouragement.”

Martin Luther used to say a parent needs both a *rod* and an *apple* to raise kids. *Wait, that’s not the right apple.*

He meant a rod to spank the child when he rebels, and an apple to reward his good and godly initiative.

Raising children requires a healthy balance. Kids need both *a rod of correction and a nod of approval.*

As Christians, let’s live out our high calling at home **and** on the job! Verse 5, “**Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ...**”

The Roman world of Paul’s day was full of slaves or “*bondservants.*” Some of you may think your boss treats you like a slave, but you’re not one. Yet what Paul says to slaves also applies to modern employees.

And he tells us to **obey the boss.** We should tackle our duties as if Jesus Himself assigned them to us.

Work with sincerity - from the heart, as if we were serving Jesus Himself - not just earning a paycheck.

Verse 6, “**not with eyeservice, as menpleasers...**”

We’ve all seen this firsthand. The boss walks in the room and everybody gets busy. He exits and everyone slacks off. That’s “*eyeservice, as menpleasers.*”

Once a fellow was asked, “Are you looking for work?” He replied, “*Not really, but I would like a job!*”

We need to do our work “as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men...”

For me, the real measure of spiritual maturity is the ability to do whatever we do to God’s glory... *whether it’s turning a wrench, or programming a computer, or servicing a customer* - can we do it as unto the Lord?

We should all be able to turn our work into worship!

Verse 8, “knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free...” The eternal paycheck you receive won't be signed by your employer, but by the Lord.

And verse 9 has some instructions for the bosses.

“And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.”

A boss should always remember he also has a boss. He should treat His workers fairly and charitably.

And you should recognize the revolutionary impact of Paul's instructions on marriage, parenting, and labor.

All ancient cultures taught that wives should submit to husbands - and children to parents - and bondservants to masters. That was nothing new.

But Christianity was the first and only faith to introduce the principle of **reciprocal responsibility.**

Husbands also had an obligation to love their wives. Parents shouldn't provoke their children. Bosses shouldn't bully their workers... The Christian ethic transformed both home and

work. It altered every dimension of life!

Which brings us to the third section of this book. We're seated in Christ, we're to walk worthy of our calling, now we need to stand against the devil. For like a child a Christian learns to sit, then walk, then stand.

Verse 10, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." Whenever it comes to dealing with the devil, human beings are prone to two mistakes...

On the one hand, we underestimate him. Satan loves for us to think of him as a little imp in red leotards, horns, tail, and pitchfork. Perhaps the devil's greatest feat is in making so many people think he doesn't exist.

Don't take him seriously, and you'll fall into his traps.

But on the other hand, don't overestimate him.

Satan is not God's equal. He's *infinitely inferior*. He is a created being gone sour - an angel booted out of the choir because of a runaway ego. Yes, he has power, but God is greater! 1John 4:4 tells us, "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."

Remember Satan is a defeated foe. The only time the devil can hassle a Christian is when we let him.

Today, Satan wields his power only because he's tolerated. He's ripping Christians off and stealing their blessings - but he does it with a bluff and a pop gun.

We need to rise up as James 4:7 tells us, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." On your own, you're no match for the evil One, but Paul says, "*be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.*" Let's be strong!

For no one knows Satan's limitations better than he does. That's why seldom does he attack us head-on. If he does, he'll run you straight to Jesus, and it'll be curtains for him. Thus, Satan prefers a bag of tricks.

Paul calls them "the wiles of the devil" - *doubt, fear, jealousy, condemnation, discouragement, dissension.*

Satan will do all he can to distract you from *who you are* and *what you have* in Christ. The devil wants to undermine our faith, and rob us of our blessings.

Thus, Paul tells us, verse 12, "*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*" Never forget it's a spiritual battle!

We don't fight modern wars with swords and spears, and we don't fight spiritual battles with fleshy techniques. This is why we need spiritual weaponry!

And God gives us armor, "*Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*"

"Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth..." Understand, while Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesians he was chained to a Roman soldier. Thus, he had plenty of time

to inspect their armor.

In fact, Paul uses the gear issued by the Roman Legion as analogous to our spiritual armor...

And the first item he mentions is the belt of truth.

The ancients believed the loins, or abdominal area, was the seat of the emotions. Even today we talk about "gut feelings." And Satan tinkers with our emotions. If he can cause us to walk by feeling rather than faith, he can sink you. Thus, Paul says strap on the belt of truth.

Just because you wake up one day and don't feel like a Christian doesn't mean you're not one. We need to bind our feelings in the truth of Scripture. Rest on His immutable Word, not our fickle, fleeting feelings.

Don't let your *devotion* be determined by *emotion*.

And then, "put on the breastplate of righteousness..."

The ancients viewed the heart as the seat of the desires. And for Paul, the heart needed to be protected.

We need to nurture and cultivate godly desires.

Conversely, Satan is quick to inflame old desires. Be on guard. Remember you're not the same person you use to be - your deepest desires have changed.

Verse 15, "and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace..." The Roman soldier wore a unique type of sandal. Their soles had stubs so the soldier wouldn't slip on the rocky terrain.

At times, we can get blindsided and knocked off balance. Someone attacks our faith with questions we can't answer.

We become confused and are tempted to doubt. In such times, we need to rest in God's peace.

When there is confusion in your head, recall the peace in your heart. No one can deny the presence of God that you sense and the miracle Christ has done in you.

Let God's peace steady your faith, until you have the opportunity to seek out the answers to your questions.

And verse 16, **“above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.”** The Roman shield was big enough to protect a soldier from a shower of flaming arrows. He crawled under the shield and waited out the attack.

Realize, instead of single thrusts, Satan often lobbs volleys of evil all at once. In those moments, we need to hold up our faith and trust the Lord no matter what.

Rest in your faith until the attack has passed.

It's interesting, the Roman shields were gang-able. They interlocked so a group of soldiers could join shields and create a blanket of protection. Likewise, our faith gets stronger when believers combine faith.

“And take the helmet of salvation...” This fallen world spews negativity and cynicism that sours our outlook.

This is why we need *mind protection* - a helmet! Safeguard your thoughts with God's good news.

A football player would never go into a game without a helmet, and we need to guard our perspective. Paul tells us in Colossians 3:2, **"Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth."** *Wear a helmet!*

Before we leave our armor - notice the one part of the body not covered? It's **the back**. There's nothing for our back - *and why?* God never wants us to retreat.

Stand against the devil - don't run from him.

The French Foreign Legion has a tremendous motto, "If I falter, push me on; if I stumble, pick me up; if I retreat, shoot me." God has no armor for our backs!

And we're given two offensive weapons in the next two verses. First is "The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." The Bible is sharp and powerful.

And it's "*the sword of the Spirit.*" Under the Spirit's influence, the Scriptures slice to the heart of the matter. They shred the lies of Satan and dissect our motives.

In 2 Samuel 23:10, one of David's mighty men, Eleazar, fought the Philistines "until his hand was weary, and his hand stuck to the sword." His hand froze to the sword's handle. He couldn't put it down.

And this should be our attitude toward God's Word.

Then verse 18, "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints..."

Prayer is the heavy artillery. From behind enemy lines, you can bomb the enemy's stronghold. You can blast away excuses and breakdown a person's defenses before you ever move in to share the Gospel.

Paul encourages the Ephesians to pray, and while they're at

it, he asks them to pray, “for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” Remember, Paul is *writing* in a rat-infested prison, but he's not *whining*...

He sees his circumstances as an opportunity. If God has him in prison, it's to share his faith. He asks them to pray not for *bail money*, but for *boldness* to witness!

Verse 21, “But that you also may know my affairs and how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you; whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our affairs, and that he may comfort your hearts.” Tychicus was sent to Ephesus to deliver this letter and update the church on Paul's condition.

The Apostle closes with a benediction, “Peace to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.”